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ANGLING RESORTS

NEAR LONDON



*THE THAMES AND THE LEA*



ANGLING RESORTS NEAR LONDON,

*THE THAMES AND THE LEA.*



# ANGLING RESORTS NEAR LONDON,

## *THE THAMES AND THE LEA.*

BY

J. P. WHEELDON,

PISCATORIAL CORRESPONDENT "BELL'S LIFE."



LONDON :

TRÜBNER & CO., LUDGATE HILL,

1878.

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268. b. 211.

**Ballantyne Press**  
BALLANTYNE AND HANSON, EDINBURGH  
CHANDOS STREET, LONDON

## TO MY BROTHER FISHERMEN.

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IT has been a great gratification to me to find that, during my connexion with the public press as a piscatory correspondent, my work has been of some little value to those who, in search of fishing quarters within an easy journey of their homes, have from time to time referred to the columns of "Bell's Life" in search of reliable information, in which journal much of the subject-matter of these pages has been already published.

My thanks are due to the proprietors of the journal in question for permission to republish papers which had already passed into their hands ; and now, at the solicitation of many friends whom I have met from time to time while wandering, rod in hand, in quest of sport, I place them before the general angling public, together with copious additions and corrections to what had been originally written.

Many faults may be found, many imperfections, but, dedicating my little book to my brothers of the angle (and desiring no more powerful patron), I leave it, with hopes for its success, in their hands.

J. P. WHEELDON.

*September 23rd, 1878.*





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# ANGLING RESORTS

NEAR LONDON.

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## THE RYE HOUSE.

QUAINT old Isaak, the father of the gentle craft, must surely have had in his mind something like this ancient inn, with its snug, cosy rooms, big, open-mouthed fireplaces, up which the crimson flame goes roaring and crackling on a wintry night, or, with the windows flung wide open to admit the gentle summer gale that comes laden with the breath of a thousand flowers, when he wrote of "the honest ale-house where we shall find a cleanly room, lavender in the window, twenty ballads stuck about the wall, and a hostess both cleanly and civil." It is a fitting description of one of the pleasantest spots to which a smoke-dried Londoner could wend his way, and, let him be a disciple of the rod or no, he may spend many a worse time than he is likely to do by calling upon Mr. Teale, the proprietor, and after a glass of his capital ale, filling his pipe, and sauntering through the historically-interesting old place, and into the well-kept grounds behind. In 1683 this Rye House Inn, or King's Arms as it

was then called, was kept by one Sheppard, and the conspirators engaged in the celebrated Rye House Plot were frequently in the habit of meeting at the house to perfect their nefarious designs against the life of his Majesty Charles II. and the Duke of York upon their return from Newmarket Races. Apart from its historical interest, the Rye House is well known as a resort for the angler. It is therefore to brothers of the rod, who have not, mayhap, made much acquaintance with the "silvery Lea," and the denizens of its waters, that the following remarks may prove useful. Years ago, when my piscatorial experience was much more limited than now, I used to eagerly look for my Saturday's paper, in order to skim the cream of the "Angling column," and get at what they were doing on Thames, Colne, or Lea. Somehow I always had a sneaking fondness for the last-named stream, and so surely as the announcement was made that "Mr. So-and-So had a splendid take of chub," or perch, perhaps, from some favourite Lea-side resort, than off I used to set to the same locality, burning with ardour to rival or eclipse the doughty deeds of "So-and-So." This is all very well, but, under such circumstances, the eager fisherman often gets to the water, and has not the remotest idea of where to sit down when he arrives there. An hour is first spent in finding the keeper, if it is a subscription water, and then, when he has been palm-oiled sufficiently, and heart and tobacco-pouch opened to him at the same time, the somewhat vague direction is obtained. "Well, you go down to the further bend there, you see they

trees, fish the first eddy as you comes to ; and you're bound to be right." After bidding "velveteens" good-morning, and with "they trees" in the mind's eye, off the new comer starts, humming an accompaniment to the blackbird's warble from the hawthorn-spangled copse, as he trudges along the pathway down by the river side. "They trees" are reached at last, to find there, or thereabouts, two or three bends, about forty eddies, and a nice little problem it is to work out as to which of them is the right one. Just to avoid this possibility to the angler intending to visit the Lea for the first time, I have thought of taking some few of the more prominent fishing stations, and mapping out, not alone from memory, but from present every-day experience, the most likely place for the stranger to try his skill upon. Coming from the station, the bridge crossing the river, and leading immediately to the inn, is seen in front, the stream running to the right and left. Turning sharp round at the foot of the bridge to the right, upon the towing-path side, some capital swims can be found directly opposite the gardens of the inn, and in the winter time, when the fish always feed better than they do in the more balmy months of the year, good roach fishing can often be obtained here. No more reliable hint can be given to a stranger wandering along the banks of an unknown stream, than that afforded by noting "the trail" left behind by brother piscators who have been at work previously. So certain as are observed at the edge of the stream, a well-trodden spot with the marks of the basket or seat left behind,

a bit of groundbait scattered about, or trodden into the bank, then is the place worth a trial. Look a little closer on the grass to the left hand, and mayhap here and there a silvery gleam is noticed amongst the verdure, which turns out to be a scale, bright as a fresh-coined shilling, telling of a capture at some time or other. Try here, then, sooner than go on further, to where the river looks, perhaps, better. Here, it is long odds upon there being a fair bottom, and at the other place the probabilities are that the angler gets "hung up" the first swim. The favourite hair line, too! "Dash it!" he exclaims, trying all kinds of dodges to get clear, with no result, and at last he breaks the line just above the best float, which is seen for one moment, and then the current sucks it down, never, except with the very rarest luck, to be found again. Two hundred yards lower down on the towing path is a very clearly defined bend in the river, and at the point of the bank that juts farthest into the stream is the celebrated "Half Moon Swim," in the winter time, and on favourable days a sure find. It has a splendid bottom, level as a billiard table, and at the season just named, when weeds have been nipped down by frost, is singularly free from weed. In the summer, of course, its characteristics are very different. If, reader, you are fortunate enough to find it unoccupied, try here, fishing it carefully at the point of your long cane rod, and bear in mind that you cannot fish too fine. You want a good hair line; the float shotted down to the cap—a short strike line, and when you do strike,

do it gently, because there are some "bangers" here. With these necessary adjuncts, and the fish feeding a bit, you will not regret trying the "Half Moon." The railway bridge crosses the stream some short distance further down, and from the meadow side, casting into the stream with the leger, just where the water swirls round the piles of the bridge, it is very likely that with cheese paste in the winter, or lobs in the summer months, the angler may make acquaintance with some thumping chub that lie thereabouts. Mind, however, that the gut is good, and carefully looked over prior to a start, for most anglers know with what a rattle Master Loggerhead goes when the hook pricks him. Given a tug at the top joint, then, with the line in your fingers, you feel the next pull and strike, whilst the familiar "chung," vibrating through the silk, tells you you're "home," look out for storms, and "ware arch and brick-work," for your chub here has a great notion of ploughing through the archway like an express train, and woe betide the angler who has to play "see-saw" with his fish round the edge of a bit of brick! Through the bridge, and still on the tow-path side, some capital swims are reached between the bridge and the locks. A notable one is just through the arch, and at the point of the bank where it joins the wooden piles. Here, however, the bottom is very uneven, although firm and gravelly, and is better adapted to legering than float fishing. As the stream is swift here, particularly with a push of water, it is hard work with the float into the bargain, and one has to fish with



much heavier tackle than I personally care for when roach fishing. The lock is now reached, and the lock-keeper, Ratty, will be found a very kindly old fellow, extremely polite to strangers, and glad to put them "in the know" as to the best places to fish. In the weir at the back of his cottage are some splendid jack, perch, and chub, and I should imagine that legering in the tail of the stream would be a remunerative bit of fishing, although it is a pleasure that has yet to come for me. Still, the place has all the characteristics of a Thames weir, and why barbel should not be there I know not. This summer I propose to try the place with clay balls and chopped lobs therein, and legering with a nice bright worm, yet a lob, I have an idea that it will not be fruitless. A curious point about the regular *habitué* of the Lea is, that nine out of every ten one sees are roach men, and never think of going for anything else. Here and there you come across an angler paternostering for perch, or jack fishing, and notably one Da Costa, known amongst his friends as "Imey," a well-known Lea angler, and I think the best all-round fisherman I ever met in my somewhat long experience. Hail, rain, frost, or snow, wherever one finds "Imey," there also will be his better half, and the good lady sits down to her swim, and if the fish feed ever so little there she will stay till the last glimmer of light dies out, and hooks, kills, and lands her fish like a thorough artist. I have often thought that on non-fishing days, when the weather is absolutely too bad to go out, what a comfort it must be to a real angler to have a wife

who is heart and soul with him in his favourite sport, and who delights in a yarn of bygone days and past experiences. On the opposite side of the weir is the "High Bank," and capital perch fishing may be had with both worm and minnow in the proper season, when "striped back" has begun to pack, and there are some good tench lie about into the bargain. Just at this spot "Ould Fitzgerald," another well-known man on the Lea, caught a grand fish of over four pounds, a tench, whilst paternostering for perch with worms, and here commences the celebrated "Forty Guinea Water." Keeping down stream on the tow path, capital swims are found at almost every step. Opposite the second telegraph post, past Ratty's cottage, there is a first-rate roach swim about five or six feet in depth, and from this spot some wonderful takes have been had, chief among them being One hundred and forty pounds of grand roach, taken by my friend Tom Hughes—a rare hand with the roach rod—in two short winter days' fishing; indeed, all down this bank the angler can hardly make a mistake, although it would of course be advisable for the stranger to note the most strongly marked spots—*i.e.*, those where apparently the greatest amount of anglers' patronage has been bestowed. At such places he cannot well be far wrong. Lower down, opposite some heaps of gravel, or ballast, there are two excellent swims, which will at once strike the angler's eye, and they are well worth a trial. Glorious roach are there in numbers, though it is not always that "the innocents" can be beguiled, even by the really

first-class rodsters who affect this fishing more than any other. Let us now "hark back" to the house, and go up the towpath the other way towards St. Margaret's. The first crack place reached is the "water-cress bed swim," about one hundred yards from the bridge, and twenty yards past where the pipes, carrying the surplus water from the cress-beds, run in to the main stream. The best place is, however, the first well-trodden spot that is struck upon, and there is not much chance of its being mistaken. Here there is an excellent bottom, very level, and free from weed, and capital fishing can generally be obtained. Strangers fishing here should bear in mind that an old donkey, one of the most artful and "cussed" of his race, is nearly always "on the prow!" up and down the towing path, and that, if he is given but half a chance, groundbait and paste, gentles and bran, all vanish in an instant. I have heard that an angler who objected to the disposal of his bait for the day in this summary manner, got kicked into the river for his pains, whilst Neddy quietly pouched the groundbait before he could scramble out again. There are several good swims between this point and the first big bend in the stream, which is known as the "October Hole," why, I know not, but capital fish are lurking in its depths, and a bit of cheese paste, neatly put on a triangle hook, is very likely to ensnare a venerable old chub or two from the middle of the stream. It is an awkward place, though, for legering, for the bottom is full of the toughest roots and weeds, water candocks with

stems as thick as your wrist, and if the triangle should get hitched into one of these, it is about a hundred to one on a break. Good and deep swims for roach fishing are to be found in this hole, the place being pretty well marked by the feet and basket of the "contemplative man" who has gone before, and, unless there is a heavy run of water, one can fish as fine as possible, and the bright-eyed roach will nearly always nibble a bit at a piece of white paste, with a bit of stiff bread and bran nipped round the shot just above the hook. Then we come to the next big bend in the river, and this, called "Black Pool," is, to my mind, the most fishy looking spot on the whole stretch of water. It is one of those deep, sullen-looking pools, with swirling, rippling eddies, that, to an angler's eye, always gives the idea of heavy fish being located there. This is the spot for a good jack ; perch lie here as thick as peas, and the way they sometimes rush at the minnow when you are paternostering with these bright little fellows, is a caution. At other times they will not look at one, and in this case put on a small bright red, or brandling worm, and you are almost certain of getting a brace or two of good fish. Now let us look at the opposite bank, and Charon in imagination having ferried us across Black Pool, we land on the meadow side, to find it a sedgy, rush-fringed margin to the stream, with deep holding stretches of water, eddying round the projecting corners of the bank, and then flowing on, smoothly and quietly, towards the house. It is unquestionable that the best jack lie hereabouts,

although they are not often taken of any great size, and capital cover is afforded them by the rushes and water-flags that grow in profusion round the shore. The whole of this meadow side, down to the house, will give very fine sport to an adept with the paternoster. By-the-by, I have always found it a good plan, when perch fishing, to look carefully into the little eddies and lay-bys, and note where the shoals of small fry chiefly assemble. In all probability, as a shadow is thrown on the water, the little fellows will bolt for the cover of the bank. If, therefore, the angler has been quick enough to catch sight of them before they get to cover, he should wait patiently for a moment or two until they again emerge from their concealment, and then if he finds that they hang about the place, circling amongst the eddies, backwards and forwards, as the stream catches them, he may depend upon it there is a likely *habitat* for a perch or two. Pop on a lively minnow, and drop in the paternoster quietly, without splashing, and very likely you will get "a knock." If so, you know what to do. At the house, again, there are some good swims between the trees growing in the gardens at the back of the inn. All along the meadow side is a good place to try for jack, and so on down to the railway bridge, where, as I have already said, there is a noted hole for chub. In my next paper I will treat of the fishing to be obtained at the station above the Rye, St. Margaret's.

## ST. MARGARET'S.

ST. MARGARET'S, the next fishing station above the Rye House, is distant from London about twenty-two miles, is reached by train from Liverpool Street; and when the piscator arrives at the little station he is not five minutes' walk from the scene of his labours. The whole of this fine stretch of water is free, and the angler who is pretty well up in the very distinctive character of Lea fishing is quite likely to get as good sport here as in some of the more exclusive places. Of late years, thanks to the indefatigable exertions of the Conservancy Board, aided by the Central Committee of London Anglers, netting has been greatly checked, and the vagabonds who used to prowl about under the cover of darkness, and take out fish by wholesale, now, happily for good sportsmen, do it only at extreme risk to themselves. I devoutly wish that their punishment, when taken red-handed, could be made legally a deal more severe than it seems can be meted out at present. A bridge crossing the stream is seen in front immediately upon clearing the station yard, and turning to the left, and following the towpath, the angler, after a few moments' walk, finds himself opposite a fine, open piece of water, called the "Broad Water," where there are some excellent roach swims along

the towing-path. I think the best of them is nearly opposite the telegraph post in the middle of the bend, but if the intending piscator keeps his eyes open he cannot well mistake the crack localities, for they are much patronised by London men, and if he intends to try for roach he must be on the spot pretty early to get into one of the more favoured places. These remarks, however, apply much more to Saturdays and Sundays than any other day, the probability being that on week-days he will not find so many down, and I have frequently found myself "Monarch of all I surveyed." The swims along this bank are deep, with a slow, quiet current, and, when the water is in fair condition, the very *beau ideal* of roach swims. If the angler fishes at the point of an eighteen-foot rod, it is plenty far enough out, and it is impossible to fish too fine. Good hair should be always used in preference to gut—that is, if it is really good. Bad, crinkly hair is worse than useless, and the probability is that if one has not fairly tested the line previously to a start, the first fish one hooks over a sprat in size effects a break. On the other hand, good hair is elastic, and gives to the heavy pulls of a big fish like a spring, whereas with gut the strain is always at the same ratio, one does not get half the amount of real play with the spoil, it almost always "beads," and thus shows much more clearly in the water. A short strike-line is very advantageous in roach fishing, and the line should be held nearly taut from the top of the float. The least indication of a nibble should be treated with attention by the angler, who, striking gently from the wrist


alone, and not from the full force of the arm, will likely enough with practice hook his fish with anything like a fair bite. There are besides roach, tench of large size in this "Broad Water," and although they are fish of the most capricious character, it is just as well to put a line out, the hook being baited with a nice bright marsh or lob worm, well on the bottom, and thrown out as far as one conveniently can. The float used should be a large reed or quill, and carrying sufficient shot, so that when the weighted portion of the line drags on the bottom it would have a sufficiently resisting power to the gentle current to keep the float nearly in its place, and without drifting in to the side. Of course, in the event of a push of water this drifting will, without doubt, ensue, so that the angler must use his own judgment very much in the matter when he gets there and sees for himself the state of affairs. Plenty of jack and perch are here as well, and the best way to insure a bag is, in my opinion, to paternoster with gut tackle, taking care that the hooks are not too large, and using minnows or the smallest roach and dace. The angler should have a long, light rod of cane, with standing rings, and fine yet strong running tackle, and it will be found better rather to dip down from the point of the rod than to throw far out, inasmuch as there are plenty of weeds here, tough ones into the bargain, and one is less liable to get "hung up" by dropping the line from the point of the top joint, than by throwing far out, and then scraping along the bottom with the lead in working home again. The meadow side is the best for this class of fish-



ing, and the angler should always bear in mind that fish can see him before he can see them, keep well out of sight, and, above all, "lightly tread," for both jack and perch have a habit of lying close in to shore, and a heavy foot put down with a thump, making the ground vibrate, will send them shooting off to quieter regions. The running line held taut with the left hand easily distinguishes the quick, jerky bite of the perch, which should be instantly taken advantage of, or the more stealthy, sneaking pull of the pike, who requires more time to be given him, from the catch of a weed, or any like obstruction. Strike then, and having hooked your fish, good luck be with you in the landing of it. Retracing our steps to the bridge again, and pursuing the towing-path down towards the Rye House, some capital perch ground for the paternoster is found directly after clearing the bridge, and opposite a wharf, on what we will still call the meadow side of the stream, although here and directly opposite there is no meadow. There are also some big jack hereabouts, and one particular fish has, it seems, quite a local reputation for settling tackle. Certain it is that I hooked two good fish at this place last autumn, but could not quite manage them with the light perch tackle I was using. Lower down the angler will come to a stream that runs into the main river, called the Amwell Magnum stream, and there are some good roach swims opposite to the mouth of this tributary, the exact locality of which is easily defined by the marks left upon the bank by the baskets and footmarks of previous piscators. *Here, too, in the broad open piece of water formed*

by a bend in the main river, and the mouth of this stream, chub lie in galore, and in the summer time a lob would be found a peculiarly attractive bait, ditto old cheese in the colder months of the year. I have never seen the fly used for these handsome, thick-backed fellows, and yet, I should fancy, from the character of the water, that a big humble bee or cockchafer in the balmy June and July evenings would meet with attention from the loggerheads intent on a meal. Yet another and most tempting morsel for these gentlemen is the common blackbeetle of the London'kitchens, and with this bait I once took upon an open part of the Colne the best lot of chub that it was ever my good fortune to have in my fishing basket. They are not nice things to handle, it must be admitted, but they are a rare killing bait for all that. The plan I adopted on the occasion referred to was the following: I used a light cane rod with standing rings, fine running tackle, gut bottom, about a yard in length, and as fine as natural gut can be got, a small, yet stout hook, a large quill float, carrying eighteen or twenty No. 6 shot, with the depth regulated so that the bait swam down with the current about mid water. The line should be held as straight from the float as possible, letting as little fall upon the water as can be, and the way that float shot under was a caution. At the point of the bank of the meadow side of the Lea, and just where the Amwell stream joins the main river, there is a splendid swim for roach, and when there is a push of water the fish seem to work up to the mouth of the Amwell so as to evade the main stream rolling down in flood. At the second style

or gate on the towpath from St. Margaret's Bridge the free fishing ends, and the sacred precincts of the Rye House water commence, so that the angler must be mindful of trespassing. Just before striking this gate, however, there are two first-rate roach swims that are well known to the *habitués* of the water, and excellent fishing is to be had from either of them ; the best though is, I think, the one close by, in fact level with, the gateway, and it cannot well be mistaken, for there is quite a hard, well-trodden standing or sitting place, close to the water's edge, worn firm and hard by innumerable baskets and the heavy boots of the owners. It is, however, an awkward place to manipulate a long rod at, but if the fish feed a little, worth a trial, even though it be found difficult somewhat to land them. Let us start again at the bridge and walk down the meadow side of the river. By-the-by, close by the bridge is a little old-fashioned "pub," kept by one Foxall, and the angler who does not mind roughing it a little can here get a good mug of warm and most comforting tea, a beverage not to be despised at the finish of a cold day by the water side, and one that my experience has proved to be more effectual in refreshing the system generally, than all the grog that can be swallowed. Again a hint. If roach do not feed upon your visit, try for perch and jack. No bait, perhaps. Mem., in such a case you might get them at the aforesaid little public ; anyhow it is worth trying. The meadow land down to the stream that runs up to the "Pied Bull" is all private land, but the owner, who is a butcher in the



village, will, I am sure, give permission to any gentleman to fish from his land, and it is an advantage, because one is not bothered with the canal barges on that side, whereas it is a case of "up sticks" every now and then on the towing-path. I do not know of any crack swims on this meadow for roach fishing, but it is very good perch and jack ground, and of the latter tribe a sprinkling of really good fish lie hereabouts. At the extreme point of the meadow, however, and just under a solitary willow tree, there is a grand eddying swim for roach fishing, and this, if the angler is fortunate enough to get it, should never be left, for capital fish are here located, and if they do "come at it" the fun will be fast and furious. Chub lie here too, and plenty of them, the piscator who is therefore roaching, say with gentles for bait, must never be surprised if, when the float goes suddenly out of sight, and he strikes, to hear the "chung" of the vibrating line that tells of a big-un being hooked, and then comes a sudden rush like a rocket—if to the middle of the stream, why, it is long odds on the fish; if sideways, the only chance is to be quick, and run with him. It is no use sitting still and trying to check him; run with him till his first burst is over, and then, handling him tenderly, as "though you loved him," try to turn him, and, this being done, the game may be over. Adopting these tactics made me master of three grand fish whilst roach fishing with tight line on the last day of the season. They weighed over ten pounds when I got them home, and now grace the walls of my special growlery.

## BROXBOURNE.

BEFORE submitting this paper to the public I deemed it advisable to have a run over the water, not alone with the view of refreshing my memory, but to learn from the keeper the latest piscatory news of the past few seasons, and the more immediate prospects of the present day. I cannot omit thanking the proprietor, Mr. Benningfield, for his courtesy, and acknowledging the genial hospitality shown by both himself and his wife on the occasion of my visit. The Crown at Broxbourne has a wide reputation for the beauty of its gardens, which are carefully tended by experienced and practical men, and indeed promise, as Mr. Benningfield says, to be this year "as lovely as Art and Nature can make them," and my advice is, go about June or July and see them, and the wealth of roses that will be found there. To the angler there is five miles of most carefully-watched water to choose from, and when it is considered that the proprietor year by year restocks it, and thus keeps up the supply, the charge made for angling cannot be considered excessive. For non-residents 1*l.* 1*1s.* 6*d.* is the fee for an annual ticket, which includes all bottom fishing, together with jack fishing in the proper season. Residents near the water are charged 2*l.* 2*s.* for the like ticket, and in each case trout fishing is 1*l.* 1*s.* extra. Then there are day tickets for bottom fishing only at 1*s.*, and 2*s.* for

jack fishing. The keeper, Norton, a civil and intelligent man, and known far and near by the *soubriquet* of "Nipper," is, I should imagine, indeed "a nipper" to evil doers, he seems to take a very great pride in his much-loved stream, and told me the other day that "he'd been over thirty year on the water, and hoped as he'd be thirty year longer." I hope he may with all my heart. The hotel, with the bright river flowing right and left in its front, is seen from the station as the train runs in ; and five minutes' walk from the railway lands the intending piscator at the door of the house, where he will get a really good glass of ale while his fishing ticket is being got ready. Then, out again into the glorious sunshine, and, turning sharp round the back of the house, the angler finds himself upon the towing-path side of the river ; and following this path, the observant man cannot fail to detect the presence of excellent swims here and there, showing the marks of past service. This path leads us direct to "Carthagenia Weir," yet, long before it is reached, the ear catches the harmony of falling water, than which, I think, no sound more surely quickens the pulse of the man with "rod and pack on back." Before reaching the weir, however, there is an old and well-known swim, from which mighty takes of silvery beauties have been had, and which rejoices in the name of the "Cat and Fiddle Swim." I tried to get at the origin of this name from the keeper, but all that he could tell me was, "that it had had the name ever since he could remember, and that's all." To fish it, the angler will have to get down a somewhat steep bank, and there is deep water close

to his feet ; but once down on the well-trodden platform, formed by the feet of countless fishermen "who have gone before," there is an eminent advantage gained—viz., that he is completely in the shadow of the bank, and hidden from the watchful denizens of the water, no little advantage this in bright water. This swim is about two hundred or two hundred and fifty yards below the Weir, and cannot be mistaken. There are several other "good shops"—to use a little angling slang—close by it, all strongly marked, but there is no doubt that the "Cat and Fiddle" is the crack locality. At this point the full roar of the water coming in foaming tumbling flood over "Carthagera," is heard, and the eye catches the frothing, bubbling volume tearing down in mad haste, while here and there the creamy foam flakes are arrested by an unseen current, and sent eddying and circling round and round, until they are sucked down in some miniature "maelstrom," scores of which are seen "circling in fitful shape," telling of the seething boiling depth of water below, and are lost to sight for ever. Here the blue sky is reflected as in a vast mirror, there the overhanging foliage reflected by the sunshine, quivers and shakes in the swift stream, shooting long rays of shadow into its depth. There is no place upon a river that has such charms for the angler as a weir. "Here's the place for big ones !" says he ; involuntarily out comes his tackle, utterly regardless that the bottom may be one vast delusion—an utter snare, and that certain wreckage of lines and hooks must ensue. Here, at Carthagera, *are some monsters of the finny tribe—jack, trout,*

perch, barbel, bream, and chub of enormous weight lie in the depths of the pool. There it was, in that further corner where the water eddies, in the summer of 1872 Mr. Bradlaugh took three glorious bream, weighing twenty-one pounds, legering with lob worms, and "Nipper" tells me that last summer he hooked and landed, on drawn gut tackle, an immense bream that weighed eight and a half pounds. No mean angling feat this. Pike have been taken here, quite of late years, up to twenty-three pounds, and Norton says there is one monster jack that will weigh full thirty pounds whenever he is brought to bank. On the lock-house side of the weir it is a bad bottom for legering, as big blocks of stone have been sunk to afford harbours of refuge to the speckled beauties of the river; so now, pushing on up stream, we make the lock-house, a quaint little shanty, clean as a pin, though, that stands shaded by some old gnarled and twisted alders in the front, while the trimly kept little garden slopes down to the water's edge behind, where the rush and sedge form a natural edging to it. Here, if the piscator, before crossing the weir, cares to take the trouble, he may, by carefully peering over the shoot, and fixing his eye upon the apron of the weir, catch sight of a goodly trout or two, lying with head up stream to watch for any chance dainty that may come with it. Tread lightly though, for no arrow ever winged its flight so rapidly as that same trout will be off and away at the least alarm. Now let us cross the bridge to the other side, and here immediately above the weir, and opposite to the lock-cottage, the far-famed Gulls presents itself. A piece of



deep, solemn-looking water, shaded by overhanging trees, and fringed in the summer time with dense masses of weed and water-lilies, the home of shoals of huge tench and carp, while mighty jack lurk like tigers in the jungle, and hide deep in its watery fastnesses. Two large willow trees on the opposite side of the lock denote the whereabouts of a famous tench hole, and I would strongly advise the angler who sits down to this swim not to trust too fondly to a tight line, for it is just likely that his hopes and his line at the same time may be rudely shattered. There is another hole fifty yards higher up, of much the same character, and of great depth, the plummet all along this side telling of eight, ten, and twelve feet, while the depth in the middle is far greater. Some bouncing chub lie here, too, and they wax fat and strong in this sheltered heavy piece of water. We are now on the meadow side of the stream, and push our way on, finding splendid swims at nearly every step, the water the very perfection of roach water, and the fish of this class are all big, thick-backed fellows, that, once got on the feed, will well repay the angler who sits down and gets among them with his light roach tackle. All up this bank, to the corner opposite the lock-house, near "Cook's water," and which is about a mile, perhaps, from Carthagera Weir, will be found capital ground for the pater-noster, with worms or minnow for perch, lots of which handsome, plucky fish lie along this deep sheltered bank. The latter baits are, however, only allowed to annual ticket-holders, and one rod and line only to be used. Re-

tracing our steps, we get to the weir again, and, keeping down the meadow side, we come to a bit of the bank which stands high up from the other level, sheltered at our backs with a clump of five or six dwarf willows. Here is the place, opposite the second tree, to throw one's leger right out to the middle. The bottom of the weir pool on this side is all sand and gravel, and the season ticket-holder who is entitled to use lobs will, with this killing bait, be certain to send his barbed steel into something worth landing. A ditch which runs at the back of the before-mentioned willows trickles to the main stream lower down, and at the mouth of this ditch is a noted swim for tench again, slow, deep, and heavy. Just at this spot Mr. Benningfield quite lately took twenty-eight fish, all tench, weighing over eighty pounds, all of which he restored to the water again, save four, which now grace the walls of his own sanctum, side by side with the three big bream that fell to Mr. Bradlaugh's rod. A friendly plank across the ditch affords us the means of getting on to the mead, along which one can walk down to the house. In the summer dense and thick beds of water lilies edge the stream here, and carp as big as sucking-pigs lie hidden in their shelter. Capital roach swims are at hand everywhere, and the stranger cannot well help noticing some fifty yards below the ditch two old time-worn stumps, that rear their moss-covered heads close to the river's edge. Years ago these stumps formed the foundation of a fishing seat, which was the chosen spot of a famous rod, one Taverner, and to this day it is called "Taverner's swim," an

excellent one it is, and exactly opposite the Cat and Fiddle. All down this meadow is first-rate fishing, and we now get to the house once more, where we start again down the towing-path, leaving the house on the left hand, and set our faces towards "King's Weir." Roach water is found all down this bank, excellent spots, too, on the opposite side in the meadow, and it is impossible to help pausing to admire the mill-stream head which joins the main river some hundred yards below the house, the water looking "jacky" in the extreme, while the roots of the graceful willows, that, with their pendant feathery foliage drooping to the water's brink, are reflected on the glassy surface, surely are the homes of many an armoured perch and leather-lipped chub. Exactly opposite the second horse gateway from the house, on the towing-path side of the river, is a well-defined bend in the stream, and here is an old and well-known chub hole. Perch, too, of good size haunt its depths in large shoals. The water is very deep, fully eighteen feet in the middle, and the hole is crammed with "big-uns," some of which would doubtless fall victims to the wiles of a good rod. Lower down, and within sight of the weir, the stranger cannot fail to notice a meadow, opposite the tow-path, where there are some large heaps of gravel or rubble. Facing these heaps there are five first-rate roach swims, averaging five and six feet in depth. These are known by the name of the "Ploughed Field swims," and for roach fishing it would be hard to find better. Now succeeds a long stretch of water excellent for jack fishing, and then crossing the lock bridge we get

to the little spit of land whereon the keeper's cottage stands. Here the stranger angler gets the first glimpse of the famed "King's Weir." What a glorious pool! The water, coming with a fall of five feet over the shoot, positively foams in huge waves, dashing up the spray a yard high in its impetuosity. Four streams go tearing down with a mighty force, the centre current, from its greater volume, beating the others in their race. Here are deep holes, there scours and shallows, over which the swift stream bubbles, while the long weeds wave like snakes, or the tresses of the water naiads. As I am standing watching the boiling flood, a grand fish breaks right through the foam, and I just get a glimpse of one of the monster trout that make this pool their home. "Big fish that, sir," says Norton, at my elbow, and I nod assent. Better fly water could not be imagined. There on those shallows thousands of large dace may be seen in the summer, and I should fancy a black gnat, tipped with a gentle, would be a rare attraction. Under those overhanging banks to the left, where the roots of the willows may be seen creeping through to the water, are grand chub haunts. How about whipping with a black slug? or a cockchafer deftly thrown under the boughs, as the glorious June sky begins to fade from blood-red to pearl-grey? But, then, more's the pity, one never sees the fly used on the Lea. The bottom of this pool is level sand and gravel, the plummet telling of eighteen, twenty, and twenty-five feet, and the barbel here are of extraordinary weight, many of them being ten and twelve pounds. They are, however,

very shy and crafty, and are seldom taken ; and yet I fancy I could get the blind side of some of them if I tried. I have an idea that if they were first well baited up for a day or two with plenty of carrion gentles, some of them would be felt rooting like pigs, if one tried for them with a well-made-up "clay ball," plentifully covered with "carrion," and with an artful little triangle peeping out at the small end thereof, with five or six well-scoured liver gentles as an attractive bait, or that a continued and plentiful supply of lobworms must bring them on at some time, and I only wonder, knowing they are there, that some one or other of the subscribers does not devote a week to them. As a matter of course "clay-balling" could only be adopted from a punt or boat. To the left of the weir is an old stone wall, moss-covered and time-worn, and here is the place, supposing the angler to be bank fishing, to throw the leger from. Just below it the stream suddenly curves and runs round a big bend and past an island that stands covered with drooping willows in the middle of the stream. In this bend, again, spanking chub and perch lie, and the keeper tells me that more perch have been taken from this corner during late years than he ever recollects. To the angler, the lover of the beautiful, I can heartily say try Broxbourne, and if he meets with half the courtesy that I did I shall hardly wonder if he quotes the lines attributed to Shenstone, and says :—


" Whoe'er has travelled life's dull round,  
Where'er his various tour has been,  
May sigh to think how oft he found  
His warmest welcome at an inn."

## COOK'S.

I DO not know, for its extent, where an angler could find a much better bit of water on the Lea than this. It is easy of access, not being more than half an hour's walk from Broxbourne Station, which would be the best point for the visitor to make for, starting from Liverpool Street ; and the walk straight up the towing-path, skirting, as it does, a long stretch of the Broxbourne water, and past Carthagen Weir, is a very lovely one for those who are fond of homely English scenery and the quiet of a river's side. Arrived at the head-quarters of the present proprietor, a quaint, old-fashioned public, yecept the "Fish and Eels," where some of the most extraordinary productions of the limner's art, executed in chalk or oils, that it was ever my fortune to tumble upon, will be found upon the walls of the rooms, the stranger angler should lose no time in finding James Cook, the landlord, a civil, kindly-hearted man, who, I feel well assured, will be happy to put his visitor up to any little wrinkle that may be worth his attention. I do not know that Mr. Cook is much of an angler personally, but still he marks the locale of a good fish feeding, and is always glad when his customers find sport in his water. The terms of subscription are very moderate, half a guinea per annum clearing everything, and when I add my assurance that the river is teeming with

fish of all kinds, it cannot but be considered a very small charge. Day tickets are also issued at a charge of one shilling. Going through the house and back yard—where one has literally to pick one's way through a host of the feathered creation, in the shape of snowy Aylesbury ducks and fat Cochins and Dorkings—the visitor will find himself at a little rustic stile, leading into the garden, in the summer odorous with good old-fashioned flowers, and at the end of the path will be found an ancient summer-house, in front of which the river ripples slowly and with a gentle current to the weir-fall lower down. Here, directly in front of the harbour, is an old and well-known roach swim, known for ages as the "Garden swim," from which excellent fishing is frequently obtained; the bottom is hard, firm gravel, with a depth of eight feet, and fishing well out, and with fine tackle, I think it would be found to well repay the groundbait thrown in at the end of the day. A thick hawthorn hedge divides the garden from a meadow, which can, however, be reached by going through the garden by another path, and that done, the angler will find close to the hedge, and in reality at the upper part of the "Garden swim," a really beautiful stretch that will at once strike the fisherman's eye—a firm, good bank to sit upon, a fringe of aquatic weed close in to shore, a hard gravelly bottom, where one can feel the plummet bump upon the pebbles, while it registers a depth of eight or nine feet, with a slow gentle current, where the roach man can manipulate the lightest and most delicate tell-tale of a


float ; and with such a swim as this—combined with fine weather, the wind sou'-west, a pipe, and a can of "home-brewed," what more could a man desire ? And if the fish feed here they're thumpers ! Cook tells me that at this very spot, not long ago, an angler named Edwards took forty pounds of roach in three hours ! And the swim looks as if it were quite capable of doing it again. All up the side of this meadow, at the extremity of which the range of water ends for the subscriber in this direction, will be found capital swims for roach fishing, and I do not know, with the exception of a stray tench or two, that the rodster will meet with any other game, each pitch having a gravelly bottom and deep water. Here will be found the remains of several platform fishing seats, that years ago were erected for a generation of anglers now at rest in the happy hunting grounds. Curious specimens of the exponents of the gentle art they would seem, I warrant, to the modern angler, could they but revisit the scene of their former doings ; and yet doubtless this very meadow bank has been dotted amongst the verdant herbage with many a heap of silvery slain, by men to whom the present finished system of Lea fishing was not dreamt of. Starting again at the house, and immediately in its front, will be found the weir-head, but it is seldom fished, although there are plenty of tench in the deep, still water, and then, turning to the right, will be found the pathway leading to the weir at Wicks Mill, and a right "fishy" weir it looks, every inch of it. The water foams over in





a heavy and tumultuous flood, and then goes rolling downwards in an eddying, resistless stream, with every appearance of holding rare fish below its troubled surface. Crossing the weir, one finds oneself in the meadow on the opposite side to the towing-path, the boundary of the pool being formed by old, time-worn timbers, and piles driven deep into the bed of the river. Here in the eddies shoals of goodly perch rove about, and a paternoster with minnows will tell a tale in its proper season. There, out in the foaming flood, big barbel root amongst the gravel, whilst very heavy chub succumb every now and then to the attraction of a bit of cheese. Trout, too—glorious, crimson-spotted fellows—are here, and two were brought to bank not long ago by some fortunate angler—lucky man!—whilst chub fishing. A capital place for legering will be found some fifty yards below the fall of water, where there is a lot of loose stones and gravel lying on the bank, and the bottom here is very level and good, and free from obstruction. It seems to be a vexed question, however, whether the angler has a right of fishing from the bank in this first meadow from the weir-head. Certain it is that upon one occasion I was told I was trespassing by the gentleman who either owns or rents the land, but, upon expressing regret, was courteously told to stay and continue my sport, so that I give this as a hint to others, feeling sure that no one would be denied the privilege who took the trouble first to apply for permission. Out of this first meadow, and after crossing a

stile, the angler strikes the river again at a place very properly called "The Swamp," and here's the spot for the jack fisherman. To get to the river at this place the visitor should be provided with good boots, for it is a marshy, sloppy piece of ground, with thick reeds and rushes at the water's edge, but doubtless the best jack ground on the water, and capital fish have been taken here during the past season. One angler whom I personally know, and a well-known Lea rodster, Dan Miller, got seven decent fish in one day, the best scaling some eight pounds, and that is not bad work an hour's ride from London bricks and mortar. Bear in mind, however, that no advantage is gained by making "mighty casts," sending out the live bait, or the dace or gudgeon on the spinning flight to wondrous distances. The fish lying here will be found a yard, or at most two, from the banks, and if they are thrown over frequently will soon slip their cables and sheer off. Far better, then, to drop the bait quietly down, now here, now there, say a couple of yards out, and without splashing, and that will be found amply far enough. The remains of an old bridge, the piles alone now standing, will be found here, and some rare chub and perch lie around them, but it is questionable whether it would repay for legering, for the fish, when hooked, would assuredly shoot for the piles, and, once there—good-by! Two capital swims for roach fishing will be met with below the remains of the old bridge, between some dwarfed and stunted willows, and they cannot be mistaken, for the bank will at



once tell the stranger angler where to sit down, and at both of these swims, in the winter time, splendid fishing has been obtained. In the summer they are difficult to fish from the quantity of weed growing there. We next strike the celebrated "High Bank swims," excellent for roach, chub, and perch fishing; at times the quantity of fish taken of the former class is something marvellous, but it must be borne in mind they don't always feed well. All down this meadow it is deep, heavy water—terribly deep in many places—and I would warn the stranger wandering along the banks not to get too close to the side, excepting at those places where he can see from the worn, withered herbage that many have been before, for the river, with its steady, deep stream, is constantly causing large masses of the bank to crumble away bit by bit, and then fall; and it should be borne in mind that in many places there is six and eight feet of water just under one's feet, with a smooth, slippery clay bank, four feet from the water's edge, so that due care is needed; and perhaps these remarks apply still more strongly to the opposite side. There are excellent swims for roach fishing all down this meadow-side, and one in particular, immediately opposite to Smith, the lockman's, cottage, is a very good one; the bank here is firm and sound, and the locality of the swim very clearly defined. It is a capital place, and a sure find after a push of water, for the river sweeps round a bend just above it, and, after floods, this swim will be found *not* very deep, five or six feet at most, but a nice

back eddy, into which the fish work for shelter out of the too rapid stream. Further down, at the extremity of this long meadow, the water ends at a place called "Careless," or "Carless Point," so now, retracing our steps to the house, we, by getting over a gate, find ourselves in the meadow upon the opposite side to the High Bank. In this Smith's cottage stands, shaded by a pretty clump of overhanging elms, with the stream forming the boundary of his garden. I found the lockman an exceedingly chatty, communicative fellow, who has been in his present holding a long time, and the stranger to the place might do worse than have a five minutes' palaver with him, and gather, from his keen, every-day observation of the water, and the doings of the regular men there, where the best takes had been obtained. All down the side of this meadow the river is deep and heavy, and more adapted to the leger or paternoster than for roach fishing. Half-way between the top of the mead and Smith's domicile, a single little bush grows out from the bank and overhangs the water, and just under this bush is a rare "chub shop." In legering here you do not want a heavy lead; a very small bullet, with a large well-drilled hole through which the line will run freely, is the best, and have the bullet so placed that it works upon the running line rather than the gut bottom, for by this means it avoids chafing the gut, as well as any possible obstruction from a knot. No more artful fish ever wagged tail than your chub, or chevin, as old writers used to call him, so that the more delicately he is

angled for the more likely will be a successful issue. Cast out, not too far, and let the stream take the pellets of cheese-paste level with this bush—the bait should be the size of a big marble; then, having thrown in a few bits of cheese as an attraction—and the more strong-smelling the groundbait the better—hold the point of the rod down stream, the running line between the thumb and forefinger of the left hand, and, if chubby is at home, and in the feeding mood, you'll soon be aware of the fact. If you do not get a pull in ten minutes, or a quarter of an hour at most, try another place, for these fish are arrant rovers, and shift restlessly about, more particularly towards the autumn. In midsummer, when they get into a deep hole, with overhanging trees, from which grubs or insects are constantly dropping, there they are more likely to stay, and such a haunt usually holds a few big fellows. The most important item I leave to the last, and that is, keep well out of sight, right away from the bank, more carefully to avoid vibration, and if you hook a fish play him, and, when ready for the net, bring him rather to some place you have previously determined upon, where the bank is firm, than risk going head over heels at a place where it looks all right at the top, but where the river has undermined it until it is like a pie-crust with nothing in the dish. Several bends down this side of the stream afford deep back-eddies, and if the roach do not feed in their more accustomed places, it will be found a good and possibly a remunerative plan to leger for them, both in these eddies

and the deep water to be found at the tail of the weir, in the following manner :—Groundbait made of stale soaked bread and bran, so worked and kneaded up as to be of the consistency of very stiff clay, is of course used. First find the depth, and then shift the float, so that the bait lies two or three inches on the bottom ; then get a piece of this stiff groundbait, the size of a bantam's egg, and nip it firmly round the shot just above the hook, and drop it quietly down. The weight of the ball of groundbait will keep it in one position, or nearly so ; and it is a method that will frequently be the means of grassing the best and largest roach. Strike when the float moves slowly off, not before, because when one sees a sudden dip it is just as likely that it is the fish pegging away at the ball of groundbait.

## WALTHAM.

THIS quaint, old-fashioned spot will well repay a visit, and will be found interesting to the antiquarian, the lover of rural scenery, and the angler. Barely fifteen miles from the smoky, dusty streets of London, one gets, after a short run from Liverpool Street, at once into the midst of charming country nooks, and the Waltonian will here meet with enough of legendary lore from any one who is conversant with the water to make him at once anxious to wet his line. The visitor will find that, turning to the left hand, from the top of the steps leading from the station yard, a broad, straight road lies in front of him, and this leads direct to the village. There are two separate fisheries here, both rented by Mr. Clark, whom I feel well assured will be delighted to render to the stranger visiting his waters every information. A yearly subscription of 1*l.* 1*s.* includes both pieces of water, and the one at the top end of the town, called the "Corn Mill Fishery," I will first deal with. It seems that since the death of the well-known Jemmy Allsupp, who used to be employed by Mr. Clark as keeper over the fisheries, there has been no one specially appointed to take his place ; but if the stranger angler will call upon Mr. Andrew Risley, of Woollatt Street, Sewardstone Street, and is fortunate enough to find him at home, I know

of no one who would be more willing or competent to give him a hint than he. Going through the village from the station one cannot help noticing the curious old street, with its high-pointed and gabled houses, many of the roofs covered with a luxuriant crop of moss and yellow-flowering stonecrop, and presently a grand old church, with some gorgeously painted windows and a square Norman tower, is seen in front, and as we near it evidence of its great age is strikingly apparent. Just before reaching the church one is startled by the rush and rattle of a swift stream, and to the left hand one catches a glimpse of a noisy little milltail, which comes winding down from the main stream above, the houses on each side being absolutely built into it, and the back kitchen windows of some of them barely a yard from the water. Andrew Risley told me when I went over the fishery that the subscribers to the water could always get plenty of dace and gudgeon for winter jack fishing, and I have little doubt that they can be obtained from this merry little stream. Turning sharp round to the left by the Cock public-house before the churchyard is reached, and following a narrow alley, the stranger will find himself confronted at the top of this passage by a magnificent stone archway of great height, that in ages long gone by formed one of the principal entrances to Waltham Abbey. It is in fair preservation still, but some of the stonework has fallen away, and wild wallflowers grow in rank profusion between the interstices of the crumbling masonry. At the first white gate past this archway commences



the Corn Mill Fishery, the stream here is full of large dace, and the water at this point would, I should think, keep any one well employed with the fly rod where so many of these game little fish are found. Following the footpath, and fifty yards below the second gate, a little bush grows out from the bank and overhangs the stream. Just level with this bush is a capital roach swim, with good, clear gravelly bottom and plenty of fish there into the bargain. The next swim, which has had an excellent reputation for ages, is called the "Willow Tree Swim," and is exactly opposite to where a fine old willow upon the other side of the river grows right into the water. Here there are wondrous shoals of heavy roach, and some of the tales that are told of the bags that have been made by bygone celebrities of the rod are something wonderful. Here it was that one Dodd, a well-known and very skilful Lea angler—dead and gone though, poor fellow—had some extraordinary takes of roach. Beware though, wielder of the single hair line, for monster chub make the sunken roots of the trees hereabouts their homes, and these roots once gained, it is all up with delicate tackle. Some hundred yards higher up the stream will be found the remains of a very old bridge, doubtless an approach at one time to the abbey, known locally as "The Old Stoney Bridge," and a most picturesque and charming picture does this corner present to the eye as one approaches it. The solid masonry, worn and grey with time, is nearly covered with moss and lichens, and a thick crop of grass, with wild wallflowers, and bluebells here

and there, covers the top of the arch. Close to the bridge, on the right hand, is a magnificent sycamore hanging over the water, and directly under this tree is a deep, tenanted by large chub and perch, and many a goodly jack lies between this hole and the Willow Tree swim that we have left behind. A capital corner for the jack fisherman is the bend, about half-way between the Willow Tree and the bridge, and a nice lively dace under ordinarily fair conditions is sure to have some attention paid to it. All the way up the meadow capital roach water is found at almost every step, whilst the scenery from this standpoint is lovely in the extreme, with extensive views fading into the blue distance on every hand. A single hawthorn bush a hundred yards from the bridge denotes the *locale* of the "Bush Swim," and it is exactly opposite the ruined entrance to an old moat. This is another famous roach swim, and plenty of sturdy, vigorous chub lie here as well. The plummet hereabouts registers a depth of six feet. In this meadow will be found the remains of some old fish "stews," wherein the brown-frocked friars of a past generation kept their carp and tench for fast-days. I could almost picture to myself, as I stood here amid the quiet seclusion, the procession of hooded monks, with the jolly old abbot at their head, wending their way from the abbey with nets and poles to drag these well-stored ponds, for the supply of their table upon days when fat venison and pasties were tabooed. Nearly at the top of this field is a place where the boys bathe, and a large poplar grows over the water. Here again is

capital ground for the roach angler, with level sandy bottom and a depth of six and seven feet. We now come to the third meadow from our starting-point, and on the opposite side to the pathway we are pursuing, three stunted hawthorn bushes will be noticed growing over the stream—they cannot be missed, for they are the only trees on that side. Under these bushes is a hole, from eight to ten feet deep, and it holds some terribly big chub and perch. The stream is narrow here; indeed, it is the whole way up, and no difficulty will be found in throwing the leger right into this hole from the bank on this side. No roach swims are found in this meadow, but plenty of jack lie the whole way up the reach, together with very large perch. Over the stile lands us in the fourth meadow, and at the foot of the third hawthorn bush another splendid swim will be found, as level as the pavement in Regent Street, with a gravelly bottom, and about five feet deep. The current here is gentle, and fine fishing can be practised, while, if the angler finds that roach do not feed freely, capital opportunity will be found of trying the legering process for roach before defined in these pages (see p. 35). We now cross the Sluice Gate and enter into a plantation, and in between every bush that grows along this bank will be found fishable water. Chub lie here again of formidable size, and the roots of the trees that grow down into the water no doubt afford them good harbourage. Many deep and sheltered holes will be found by the plummet along this bank, and on a scorching, broiling day, when fish will not feed on the bottom,

the angler who cares to take down with him a dozen or two of black beetles may have grand sport by dibbing under the boughs of the trees, either with this bait or a bumble bee, of course keeping well out of sight, and getting the fish as quickly out of the water as possible if he is lucky enough to strike one. At the fourth hawthorn tree, after passing over the Sluice Gate, will be found the crack swim of all, and this, again, was a favourite resort of poor Dodd, one of the wittiest and best of roach fishers. From this spot he has been known to have thirty and forty pounds of large roach in a day. The swim has an excellent bottom, is very level, fairly free from weed, and, if the angler does not get fish here, either they are "dead off" or it is his own fault. Well, I think I have now dealt with the most prominent features of this part of the preserve, so now, with your permission, reader, we'll retrace our steps, and try the other end of the water, called the King's Arms Fishery. To get to it we must go back through the village, and to the second bridge which was crossed when coming from the railway station; having got to this bridge, which spans the navigable portion of the Lea, we turn down the towing-path to the left, and a hundred yards from the bridge a pretty ivy-covered residence, with tastefully arranged grounds attached, is passed on the right hand, and here the angler should call, for it is the home of Mr. Clark, whom I have previously said will be only too pleased to direct a stranger. I may here add that no day-tickets are granted to either of the waters that Mr. Clark

leases, and no Sunday fishing is allowed, perhaps very wisely. The water of this preserve is of a very different character to that which we have just left, for the stream is here very wide and deep. Just below Mr. Clark's house some good roach will be found, where the swims are deep and the water heavy, but they will well repay the angler who fishes them carefully at the point of his long rod. Some distance down a large bed of reeds will be noticed, nearly opposite the new Powder Mills. Very heavy jack lie about here, but the water, or, at any rate, the best portion of it, can only be fished from a boat. The roar of the stream falling over the weir is now heard, but to get to it we must push on down the towing-path until the lock-gates are reached, and then the angler can cross, and go up the bank on the other side, to where a pretty little cottage stands, that used to be occupied by John Want, the lock-keeper, another man well known to every Lea side *habitué*, and who has now gone, like many another worthy, to his long rest. Here will be found James Dunn, the present lockman, a very civil fellow, and at the end of the day it is just possible that a refreshing cup of tea can be had. Crossing the meadow we get to the weir, or tumbling bay, and it will be found a splendid piece of water, and very deep. Large trout are here—one I heard of as being taken quite recently weighing over nine pounds, as well as barbel, bream, and chub. The bottom is very good and clear for legering, and I should fancy that, with a good ground baiting of chopped lobes enclosed in clay

balls, and using well-scoured worms for the hook, a good basket of fish might be obtained from this fine stretch of water. Sharps and shallows, lower down, present excellent water for the seldom-used fly rod ; while all along the bank deep holes every now and then remind the observant fisherman that in such places chub and perch love to congregate. The angler will now do well to get the lock-keeper to ferry him across the stream, where, immediately upon landing, capital perch water will be found. All along this meadow side the water is from six to eight feet deep close in to the bank, the walking itself fairly safe, and unlike other places further down, where the strong stream has washed the bank away. I think some of the best chub in the Lea will be found here, and I feel assured that if the angler were to adopt the Nottingham style of fishing many a grand bag of fish could be obtained. The meadow beyond, called "Cob Mead," has a great reputation for the very excellent angling to be obtained from its banks. Well-known swims are here at every step, marked upon the grass by the tracks that long service by many rodsters invariably leaves behind. At many places the water is very deep at the point of a fairly long rod, the plummet telling of twelve and fourteen feet, and in some spots a much greater depth is obtained. Roach run large at this particular place, and many tales are told of the heavy bags of this fish that have been obtained by men skilful in the use of the long roach rod ; whilst jack and chub of large size seem to make this heavy deep water their chosen home. Want of

space compels me to deal with this portion of the water less minutely than I could have wished, and it is more than likely I shall have further remarks to make at some other time. Altogether I can heartily recommend Waltham and its carefully preserved fisheries to the notice of the angler who has not previously had an opportunity of trying his skill in this particular water. The terms, it must be admitted, are very moderate, the place is within easy reach of town, the scenery is very charming, and I can answer for it that the river is teeming with fish, and large ones into the bargain. There are plenty of good inns in the village, and one I can thoroughly recommend as being clean and respectable, and the landlord a good sportsman if not a fisherman—I refer to the White Lion, in Sun Street.

## TOTTENHAM.

HALF an hour's run per Great Eastern from Liverpool Street will land the visitor at the little station of Tottenham, ten minutes' walk, turning from the station yard to the left hand, and crossing an old wooden bridge that spans the Lea stream, will show him the Old Ferry Boat Inn, a rambling, old-fashioned hostelry, standing shaded by some fine elms and chestnuts, and now in the occupation of Mr. Day. Some few years ago the river here was infested by gangs of most determined netters, and the stream suffered grievously from their depredations. All this is happily changed, and plenty of fish now await the crafty yet legitimate angler. The gardens attached to the house, and which lie immediately in front of it, are beautifully kept in order, and are no mean rivals to the glories of Broxbourne. Plenty of amusements are liberally furnished by the proprietor, boating can be had to the heart's content; and now, having suggested that a visit to this little river-side resort will afford enjoyment to others besides the silent angler, let me address myself more particularly to the fishing to be obtained there. The river runs right and left of the Ferry Boat, and the visitor to the house, particularly if an angler, will have his attention at once arrested as he crosses the bridge by a large



and expansive pool, that lies to the right hand, and which widens out, forming a very fishy-looking sheet of water. In the depths of this pool lie ponderous carp and tench of great weight, which can be seen from the bridge, in hot summer weather, lazily rolling their great sides through the weeds that skirt the margin. I have seen carp that I have little doubt would run from eight to ten pounds, while on such days, with a blazing sun over head, large shoals of heavy bream may be seen roaming about, with the back fins of some of the larger fish clear of the surface, and who every now and then send the water flying into silvery spray with the strokes of their broad tails as they are startled by an unaccustomed shadow, mayhap that of a wood-pigeon or a crow as it wings its way overhead. It is but rarely, however, that these wary old carp can be brought to bank, although now and again a capture is recorded. Some quite recently have been brought to my notice of good fish having fallen a victim to the wiles of an experienced rod. The other denizens of this deep piece of water are, however, I take it, less sagacious, notably the bream, and July and August is the time to get them. The visitor standing on the bridge cannot fail to notice on the right-hand side of the pool a well-trodden patch of ground close to the water's edge, and which is reached from the meadow, and across a marshy, soppy slip of land, where, however, there is fair footing ; and here is an excellent spot for the intending bream fisher to take his sitting, that is, if he be lucky enough to find it unoccupied. It is a

much-coveted place when the bream are "on," and at such a time, particularly on Saturdays and Sundays, it is long odds that Da Costa, prince of Lea fishers, with a troop of dependents, will be found there "tearing 'em out," as he says, "by the scruff of their necks." Now for the *modus operandi*. A long rod is next to useless. A short one of twelve feet will be found the most convenient. It should have standing rings, the running line of the very finest silk, a fine gut bottom of half a yard in length will be amply sufficient, and the hook should be a long shanked one, but not too broad in the bend. Before attaching the running line, a small, well-drilled bullet should be slipped on to the silk, and below that a perforated shot; then, attaching the gut bottom it will be found that the knot in the silk, together with the shot, form a sufficient stop to the bullet from running on to the gut link. The float need not be longer or more cumbrous than is absolutely necessary for it to be clearly seen twenty yards out from the spot where the angler sits, the gut link should rest entirely upon the bottom, with the bullet just touching it, and this will be found sufficient to accurately trim the float, though of course it has to be found by a throw or two what the depth of the spot chosen may be. Bright red, and brandling worms of good size seem to be the best bait to be used here, while a plentiful ground baiting of chopped lobes will bring the fish on if they are anything like in the humour. Supposing, then, that your spot is duly ground baited, and that your hook is ready, it will be found a good plan

to draw the needed length of running line from the winch, and then, taking it out in a long loop from the bottom ring of the rod and the winch, just catch it on a stout blade of grass or some tiny bit of stick projecting from the ground, thus keeping the line fairly taut, then throw lightly out, and it will be found that the weight of the float and bullet will send the line clear through the rings, and without "kinking," which is sure to take place if the line is simply coiled down at your feet. Should the angler be able to throw from his Nottingham winch it will of course save him much labour. Sunday is a bad day for fishing this pool, on account of the quantity of holiday folk constantly passing and repassing to and from the attractive gardens. The carp here seem to like paste as well as anything, yet I mean before long to try my favourite bait of a yellow waxy potato when legering for these fish, which is doubtless the most killing method ; triangle hooks, not too large, however, should be used. Immediately by the side of the buttresses of the bridge, and in front of a good slip of level ground, is an excellent roach swim, perhaps one of the best at this end of the water, and fish of fair size are here obtained. The swim is fully seven feet deep, and I should recommend gut tackle—as fine as can be obtained, though not "drawn gut," to be used here in preference to hair, as sometimes the big bream come in to the side on quiet days, attracted by the groundbait, and hair will hardly hold them. Quite at the tail of this pool there is an island, with some fine old willows drooping their branches

to the water's edge. The banks are hollow and overhanging, the roots of the trees, creeping through, run down into the deep stream. Here is a rare chub haunt, and large fish lie under the sheltering banks and the overhanging boughs. To the right of the island the water is shallow, but the left-hand stream is deep, and the leger can be easily thrown from the pathway by the house, which we will now pursue, right under the boughs of the willows, and where the fish are lying. At the second gateway from the inn, and before entering the meadow, there used to be, some few years ago, a good roach swim, and no better illustration can be given of how much the features of a fishery change as years roll on, than the fact that now no roach swim exists. A large hawthorn bush that once grew here, has been washed completely away by the floods of successive winters, and the stream sweeping down with great force, has formed a deep hole, that now looks the spot of all others as a home for large perch and chub. At the end of this meadow, and passing on the way some capital roach water will be found. "The Point," where the bank runs out to the stream, forming the angle of a bay or lay-by, covered with weeds and large plants, with a thick fringe of rushes at the edge of the main stream. Here will be found an excellent place for perch fishing, and there are plenty of fair-sized eels as well. Standing at the Point the leger should be thrown down stream, and towards the mouth of this lay-by, and with lobs the angler is likely enough to get a fair basket of fish. The bank on the opposite side to

the pathway we are taking has several good holes for perch and chub fishing, and in the winter-time, when the former handsome fish have "packed," minnows and a paternoster would doubtless fill the angler's basket, and it is more than likely that a jack or two might be included. Seventy yards lower down the stranger will find another large sheet of water, called the "Lower Pool," which is spanned by an iron structure supporting the water-pipes from the reservoir. Here again there are shoals of very heavy bream, and it is known that perch, carp, and tench of great weight are located here. Several good roach swims will be found, the immediate position easily defined on the banks along the meadow side of this pool; but roach are not taken here of the calibre of their brethren at Broxbourne, or "the Rye," although fair sport can be had when they are on. At the black fencing the water ends in this direction; and we can now, by skirting the fence and crossing the meadows, get to the "Copper Mill Stream," which runs up to the house again. As we wend our way up this stream, and back to the house, we shall find excellent roach water the whole of the way. The stream is deep, with a slow, even current, and an ordinary roach rod will command it at all points. The first fence has a good swim in its front, the water six feet deep, and there are plenty of fish, though they do not run large, and then we reach the corner of the hedge that divides the house-gardens from the meadows, and at the extreme corner is another capital swim for the roach fisher; all along this

bank, from the black fencing to the gardens, the angler is secure from that most annoying of all things—interruption. Through the gate and into the gardens, where, likely enough, votaries of the light fantastic business are enjoying themselves, we get to the house again, first having a peep at Mr. Day's pets in the moat that runs through the gardens, in the shape of hundreds of handsome golden carp. Through the house and into the farmyard behind, we find the old river to the left hand, while the "Copper Mill Stream" runs on the right. Just behind the house, and where a lot of felled timber is usually stacked, is a good roach swim, and then we strike the "Pigs' Styne Swim," a very good one, from six to seven feet deep. Through the gate and stack-yard, some three hundred yards from the house, is a noted spot for heavy fish—"Bell's Hole," as it is called; in this deep, again, big carp seem to be located, and so recently as August, 1877, some of the subscribers had glorious fish from this deep piece of water, the two largest being seven pounds six ounces and eight pounds ten ounces. Fish like these are not to be got in every direction round London, particularly within half an hour's run from the Royal Exchange. All up the side of this meadow deep holes can be found by the plummet, and large fish lurk in them, principally chub and perch, with now and again a stray jack. Years ago "Bell's Hole" used to be a noted resort for "the sharks," but they seem to have worked higher up the stream and got into the deep, wide, and heavy water that will be found at the extremity of the preserve where it adjoins Ford's

fishery. At this end will be found excellent water for trolling and live baiting, and, with the latter style, when it is adopted, I fancy snap tackle would be advantageous. About half a mile from the house will be found an old stunted willow-tree growing over the stream, and here is one of the best swims on the water, called the "Bee-Tree Swim." In this locality there is capital roach fishing to be had, the bottom firm and good, fairly level and free from weed. Within shouting distance, and close by a large hawthorn tree, is the "Barbel Swim," and very large fish are occasionally obtained. They are, however, very wary, and it would require plenty of patience, as well as plenty of lobs, to get them to feed. I should think some of them could be brought to bank by careful fishing, the angler keeping well out of sight, and the Nottingham method might be tried with advantage. Every now and then shallows and scours present themselves, affording capital opportunity for the fly, while the overhanging banks on the other side doubtless shelter some big chub, that would come out from their retreat with a rattle at a palmer, thrown on to the grass overhanging the bank, and then drawn down until it drops gracefully and naturally into the stream. Take it for "all in all," an angler might go further and fare worse than by trying the Ferry Boat Fishery. The water is now carefully looked after, both by Mr. Day and his sons, and they will, I am certain, give to strangers many a kindly hint. I must not conclude my notes on this water without *mentioning* the keeper of the fishery, by name

"Jimmy Lifty," a bit of a character, a cheery gossip, one who knows every inch of the stream, and the haunt of every big fish in it, and who will give the benefit of his knowledge courteously upon application. I may add that the charges at the house are very moderate, the viands good, and the ale excellent.



## FORD'S.

I KNOW of no place on the Lea that presents such a charming variety of water, or so many quiet nooks here and there that go straight home to the angler, and leave him longing, as the one under notice. Start from Liverpool Street, booking to Park Station, one stoppage beyond Tottenham, here the intending explorer should alight, for it is the nearest railway station for this fishery, and turning to the left from the station yard, and taking the left-hand road of the two that are found immediately facing as one leaves the line, it will lead through a very countryfied-looking farmyard, and immediately into the meadow beyond, in the early spring gloriously yellow with buttercups. The rifle butts are seen on the left, and the footpath leads direct to the navigable portion of the Lea. This reached, and the top of the bank gained, turn yet again to the left, and make for the bridge that will be seen two hundred yards beyond. Crossing the bridge, in the valley below, and looking this time to the right, will be seen two cottages, the one an extremely picturesque little building, smothered in ivy, and embosomed among some splendid old elms, this is Mr. Hall's residence; the other, standing close to the edge of the river, and much the older building, is very quaint in its features as one

gets nearer, and is the head-quarters of the occupier of the preserved water, which is the subject of my jottings. It is a private house, and at first sight may seem unpromising to the stranger, who has neglected to bring any creature comforts ; but "bide a wee," and ask, and I'll warrant that anything in moderation an angler may desire will be forthcoming. Mr. Ford has a room or two, and everything as clean as a new pin, at the disposal of any one who may desire to spend a few days here, his charge for the angling to be obtained is—for season tickets, 1*l.* 1*s.* per annum, including trolling and live baiting ; 10*s.* 6*d.* for bottom fishing, and 1*s.* per diem for bottom fishing only. Moderate enough, in all conscience, particularly when it is borne in mind that this water, a portion of the old Lea, and not the navigable river, lies somewhat out of the beaten path for excursionists, &c., that here one can get absolute seclusion and quiet, and I can answer for it that there are plenty of fish for those who can catch them. A ferry in front of the house, with a rope stretched across the river, will enable the visitor to reach the opposite side, and there is no necessity to await the advent of one of the male members of the household, for Miss Ford is evidently an adept with the business in hand, and will have you safely over in a twinkling. Here, right and left, are glorious shallows, rippling and flashing in the sunshine over their gravelly bed, and putting one in mind of a Devonian trout stream, swarming with large dace, and it seems they take the black gnat, and house- and dung-fly very freely. Landing on

the opposite bank, we will take the left hand of the stream, and the first swim presents itself at the end of the enclosed potato patch, fairly good for roach and dace. Pursuing our route down this meadow, we pass "Teale's Swim," which is six and seven feet deep, and has been long celebrated for its carp. Here it was that the late proprietor of the Rye House water took some magnificent fish, and it is whispered that carp have been taken here as weighty as ten pounds each. Perhaps one hundred yards above, and still on the side we first landed upon, is "Bull's Swim," another celebrated sitting, where very large hauls of chub and roach have been taken. Mr. Bull, who used to fish this spot many years ago, is now dead and gone, but tales are yet afloat of his prowess both with rod and gun. All the way up this meadow, and to the fencing at the top of the field, is splendid water, and chub—great heavy fellows—are to be had in the eddies, and they are legion, by legering. The water up to the fence is deep, six and seven feet close to the bank, and the walking perfectly safe. Now succeeds another glorious stretch of shallow, fringed with beds of aquatic weeds covered in summer-tide with white blossom. Trout and large dace and chub are revelling in the swift stream, that is rolling down towards the house behind us, looking the very spot for a skilful hand with the fly rod. At the mouth of the ditch that will be seen at the end of this meadow, and immediately in front of a large poplar, is a very deep hole, but with no particular name, that holds heavy chub and perch, and the paternoster might here, I

am sure, be profitably employed. Then, crossing this ditch, we get into the second meadow from the house, and all up the side of this mead is capital water for legering, while one hundred yards above the poplar the plummet will find another deep hole which should be carefully fished with the leger for chub. This hole can be accurately marked by its being nearly in a line with the second willow tree from the large poplar previously mentioned, and close to this willow will be found an excellent roach swim, with a slow, steady current and firm, hard bottom. Three hundred yards higher up this meadow a clump of willows and poplars, growing right into the water, will be noticed, and in between the first and second trees is another good swim for roach, with level, even bed, the stream not too swift; fish this spot with gut, however, for there are big chub here, and they are very likely to pay you some attention. The clear places between the trees should be carefully scanned by the cautious dibber, who, with a large bumble bee, cockchafer, or white moth in the evening, will surely coax a loggerhead or two to the surface if he keeps out of sight, still as the grave, and playing his fish cautiously when hooked, will so fill his creel. The scenery all around is very charming, the country stretching out to the eye for a long distance, and quiet reigns supreme. Twenty-five yards above the last landmark a very fine old willow tree, the trunk gnarled and moss-covered, grows right over the water, and the branches trail and droop into the stream. Just to the left of this is one of the best roach

swims at this end. It is called "Watts's Swim," bearing its name after a celebrated angler, who always chose this spot in preference to any other, and roach are here both heavy and in large numbers. No one who once sees this swim will wonder at the choice, for a more perfect bit of roach water could hardly be imagined. Just above this old willow is a little point that juts out, and I should imagine that if the angler were to seat himself here, keeping out of sight, and throw his leger well under the boughs of the tree, it would be a productive operation, for it looks very, very "chubby." At the mouth of the ditch which intersects this meadow and the next, is a good roach swim, five feet deep, and then crossing this ditch we come to a grand stretch of fly water, pure and simple, which leads, with but little intermission, up to a well-defined bend in the stream, and to a hole called the "Punch Bowl," celebrated from time immemorial as the home of some of the largest of the finny population. The barbel of the river are known to haunt the depths of this swirling, eddying pool, and dire is the smashing of tackle that sometimes ensues here. The best place for legering, both for barbel and chub, is at the extreme point of the bend, throwing out, so that the bait may rest fifteen yards down stream, and—*keep out of sight*. On the opposite side to the Punch Bowl there used to be a very excellent roach swim, but this is now entirely filled up. Now we get two hundred yards of deep heavy jack water, and the best plan would be to fish this stretch by throwing out to the reed beds, along the cover of which the

### *FORD'S.*

best jack lie. Another bend, deep hole, and scour, and then, at the second willow tree from the Punch Bowl is a good roach swim, five to six feet deep, with level, gravelly bottom, the fish running large here. A line of seven or eight willows will now be noticed on ahead, and more good water awaits the angler. Just before we reach the trees the eddying current reminds us of another hole, which we will pass, however, until we get between the second and third willow bush, and here, indeed, is a celebrated "shop" for large barbel and bream. It is called "Brocksopp's Hole," and ample evidence can be obtained on a hot day of the size of the fish located here by keeping still, in the shadow of the trees, and watching for the large chub that will rise presently almost under one's feet. For two hundred yards we now get very deep and heavy water, and splendid barbel lie all along this part of the stream. They are, however, to quote a little, "shy, shy, awfully shy," and would want a lot of lobs and any amount of patience ; but just imagine the fun, if one could only get them "on" at last, and such fish as I know are here ! Every now and then, in between the willows, one catches sight of a bit of roach water—to wit, between the fifth and sixth tree there is a good swim, and, again, between the two last. Here, in the next few steps, we catch sight of the river flashing and rippling, with a very strong stream as it comes round the bend, and we soon see the yellow, gravelly bottom, the long weeds waving snake-like with the current, and nothing can be done here

save with the fly. Pause now, however, the bend being reached, and contemplate "The Whirl," the deepest portion of this part of the stream. Round the edge scores of eddies chase one another in rapid succession, while the whole pool, for it is little less, will at once fill the practical angler's eye as being the place *par excellence* where the leviathans of the stream would be likely to lie. Every successive winter the aspect of this pool changes, the heavy flood comes rolling down with impetuous haste, the left-hand portion of the bank meets it in full charge; consequently, it is washed away in huge masses; and, as the banks on this side fall, and the water encroaches on what was once dry land, so the stream recedes on the other side, and weeds and rushes grow up apace; hence a once justly celebrated swim, called "Denton's Swim," that was fished from the meadow side opposite to us, is now a thing of the past. In fishing this terribly deep hole due care must be taken lest the banks give way, for it is eight to ten feet under one's nose, and twelve and sixteen in the middle. Shoals of perch lie here of good size, and jack in the shelter of the rushes on the opposite bank. At the end of this meadow a good deep will be found at the mouth of the "Chingford Ditch," and just beyond the ditch a roach swim of pretty character, at the maple-tree through the fence, and called, I believe, the "Maple-Tree Swim." And now we must pull up, and retrace our steps, for in this direction the end of our tether has been reached. Presuming, then, that we have reached our original starting

point—the ferry—we will cross the stream, landing now on the other side of the river, and turn our faces towards “Page’s Lock” yonder, that is just seen peeping through the trees. The first swim worthy of stoppage, and it will be remembered that we are now on the house side of the river, is at the first hawthorn bush we come to. It is a fairly good one for roach, although not so good as many others that will be found lower down. Fifty yards below two other good swims are well defined on the banks by the feet of those anglers who have previously fished them, and at the opposite side three tall, spiky-looking willows, growing close together, denote a good chub and barbel water, three good fish, quite lately, of the latter class having fallen to a subscriber’s rod, and others are known to be there. Two hawthorns lower down on the house side, will now strike the eye, and between the two trees is the “Bush Swim,” seven feet deep, with a gravel bed, whereon you can hear the plummet bump as you plumb the depth, and at this spot some famous hauls of silvery spoil have been made. Just below, and opposite to the black fencing, is a good perch deep, then succeeds a stretch of heavy jack water, to my mind the most likely looking place wherein to find the “fell tyrant” at home, and then comes one of the gems of the preserve, “The Pool,” a piece of deep, solemn looking water, where the shade from the overhanging trees makes it look black, and gives one the idea of even greater depth than it in reality possesses. It is sixteen to twenty feet deep, in places, how-



ever, and the stream here rolls slowly down, in complete contrast to the flash and ripple of the shallows we have left behind. Splendid carp and bream sail lazily about in the depths of this pool, while at the side, close to our feet, and under the grateful shade of the tall willows that grow on the little island at the head of the pool, are one or two glorious swims for roach, one of which, and marked by a little wooden platform, built out over the water, was a very favourite resort of poor Dodd, and the swim is thus called "Dodd's Swim." All down this meadow is roach water, and then we get to another island and some osier beds, and here again is excellent jack and chub water. Opposite the second osier bed are three good roach swims clearly mapped out by long service; they are very deep, from eight to ten feet, and are best in the autumn and winter months. A short distance below the warning post to bathers, and opposite to where three or four old moss-covered stumps of trees project from the banks, is a very deep hole, and the best chub are had from this place. Then there is a reed bed of great extent, with deep heavy water and lay-bys, which is especially prized by the subscribers for the jack fishing here to be obtained. Entering the third meadow from the house, and under the first large willow-tree from the ditch, which must be crossed to get into the meadow, is simply a lovely roach swim called the "Long Swim," and a very peculiar one it is. There is evidently a deep gully, or channel, close in to the bank, not more than two

or three feet out, and the bank goes down like a solid wall. Further out the water shallows, so that this swim must be fished not more than two or three feet out, and the angler should sit as far back as possible, and, I need hardly say, as quiet as a mouse. The roach work up and down this channel, and when they do feed they are grand fellows from this swim. The river now takes a sudden curve, and all down this bend is water ten and twelve feet deep, it is a noted spot for large carp and barbel, and chub of immense weight ; while jack as well lie all down this reach. At the end of this deep, and opposite to where four willows grow in a clump, is another good roach swim ; but it is an awkward one to fish, though, for a sunken tree lies at the end of the swim, and a hair line stands but a poor chance when a fish makes his first dash for liberty and shelter. All the way down to the Tottenham water the river is deep, and more particularly adapted for winter fishing, and jack more especially, lined with thick beds of sedge and rush, affording good lying ground for large fish. In conclusion, I can but add that for any one who has not been to this fishery—barely nine miles from the rattle of the London “growlers”—seen its many varied and interesting features, a treat is in store, and if he has even half as good a day there as I heartily wish he may, he will have rare sport indeed. The fish are there, I know ; the rest lies with the rodster.

the white, chalky road, seen in front, which leads us direct to the Mills, and to the best part of the water, as far as I have seen. Before reaching the Mills, one must perforce stop to look at the noisy millstream that comes rattling and frothing through a dark archway, the water falling over the brickwork, and rolling downwards, covered with foam flakes, making the gloomy outlet look still more shadowy and dark. Here in this impetuous little stream are very large dace, but it is shallow, and only fitted for fly water, at the best ; and from the quantity of luxuriantly foliated trees that hang over it, it would require a very skilful hand to throw from the roadway and escape "ties up." Beyond, scarce a hundred yards, are the Mills, and extremely picturesque they look as one approaches them, and then one catches sight of the mill-head, a deep, solemn-looking piece of water, that looks like holding good fish of all kinds. We then come to a gate, and through this there is a line of five or six large Lombardy poplars. At the foot of the first tree there is a very good roach swim, not very deep, perhaps five feet, but with a good clear bottom, and free from that pest of the bottom fisher—weed. Fish this swim right out at the point of a long rod, and use the finest roach tackle. Avoid too much ground-bait ; that is to say, don't throw in whole "boluses" at once, but rather nip a bit of your stiff bread and bran round the shot every now and then, and strike at the faintest indication of a nibble. Again, at the second tree there is a nice bit of level bottom, which might be productive of a good *fish* or two on a quiet day, and at the third tree

is the best swim of all, much deeper than either of the others, and looking generally more "fishy." Just to the left of the tree will be noticed the stumps, or piles I should say, of an old foot-bridge that used to span the stream here, and by the remains of these piles it looks extremely like a perch haunt, where a paternoster might, I am sure, be profitably employed. By-the-by, I have often found it a good plan when roving with paternoster in deep water, such as this, to use three hooks, baiting the bottom one with worm, the middle with minnow, and the top hook with a nice lively little dace, not too large, however. By these means it has not unfrequently happened that a slimy tench has taken a fancy to the bright, yellow-ribbed brandling on the bottom, while sometimes on turning the corner of a bed of weeds a jack comes sneaking up to the silvery little dace and gulps it down, to find next moment that he has committed himself gravely. The roar of a falling flood claims our attention now, and some lock-gates are reached, the bridge being in a very dilapidated condition; here the stream rolls over with a fine fall, and goes tearing downwards in a boiling, eddying flood. One almost involuntarily begins to unpack the leger rod, and think of the attractions of a bit of cheese paste on a triangle, and a lob below that. No use, however; it is shallow here, though it don't look like it—I should say not more than five feet at the most—and the bottom is full of snags and large stones, amidst which your gut, good as it may be, will come to grief. So we will keep up the millstream in front

of us, and presently the leger man will find more attractive water. All the way up this stream the water is very deep, from eight to ten feet everywhere, and holes now and then of twelve and fourteen. Very heavy chub lie all along here, and it is literally swarming with large dace. The fly fisher could hardly want a better stretch of water than this ; not a tree or a telegraph post, with its wires attached, and which elsewhere on the Lea presents such an insuperable obstacle to the use of the fly rod, can here be found, and the better plan is to cast right over to the meadow bank on the opposite side, close to which the best chub lie. I saw two really fine fish fall to the attractions of a red palmer one day, and Mr. Conolly, one of the best fly rods on the river, told me that he has had from this stream some excellent specimens. The "blow-line," a peculiarly killing method, has here a good opportunity, and for the benefit of the uninitiated I may explain this dodge. A long rod, not too stiff, is used, and a line of some eight to ten yards of floss silk is attached to the top joint ; this has a bottom or cast of the very finest gut, which is better than hair, for large chub are frequently hooked. A small hook is used, and baited with natural flies—either large house-flies, or, better still, the dung-fly, for dace and roach ; grasshoppers, beetles, or a big yellow-banded bee being used, supposing a chub is seen feeding under the bank. The angler must have the wind at his back, however, and blowing directly over the water. The hook being baited, hold the gut in the left hand, and wait until the gale bellies out the light floss silk ; then, when it is all fully

blown out and clear of the ground, release your gut, and away sallies the fly, settles light as a bit of thistledown on the water, and many a good fish bites steel by this process. In the hot months of the year it is almost useless for the bottom fisher to sit down anywhere along this millstream with the exception of the places I have named. The bed of the river is foul with weeds, amongst them being great water-candocks, with stems half as thick as one's wrist, and as tough as gutta-percha; but in the winter, when these have died off from the effects of a good nipping frost, I should fancy good sport might be had with the large roach that in June and July sail about in security. They are there—that is certain; but it is heart-breaking to try for them in the summer. A little bridge now looms in sight, and close by this bridge is a very deep hole tenanted by shoals of large perch that were chasing the small fry in every direction when I passed up the water. Chub, too, of great weight, lie round the piles of this bridge, and might, I am sure, be tempted to the surface by a big blackbeetle or cockchafer, insidiously "dibbled" here and there. Then, again, opposite the three willows, there is a handsome bit of roach water, but still, I regret to say, with the same wretched bottom. And now we get to a stile, and crossing this we are in the grateful shade of a plantation of trees. Just at the foot of the stile there is a deep hole of perhaps ten feet, and here is the only fishable spot that I could find. All the way up, the plummet told me of weed, weed everywhere. Strange to say, however, here it is absolutely free from the slightest impediment, and a lovely swim is in front of the angler

I would advise the roach fisher to use gut, though, if he sit down here, for there are some whacking chub in this hole, and with the stile on your right hand—in fact, close to you—and a big willow on your left, there is not much chance of running with a big fish, even if he does take it into his head to shoot up or down stream and not across. Between the second and third trees in this plantation there is another beautiful swim to look at—slow, deep, steady current, an eddy here and there close to the bank—in fact, splendid roach water, but a horrible bottom, in the summer at any rate. The trees here arch almost over the water, and I came across a lad who, armed with a simple willow wand, a hair line, with a bit of silk “topping” and a natural fly, was whipping out some capital dace, and flinging them behind him in the long grass. That boy was a born angler, for his eyes were half out of his head, his mouth wide open, “great expectations” written in every line of his face as he watched his fly from behind the trunk of the tree, and he presented a study worthy of our inimitable fish painter, and my dear friend, Henry Leonidas Rolfe, as he sat with his silvery prize in hand, extracting the tiny hook with such an expression of face as one might imagine would be assumed by the salmon angler who has landed, after an hour’s battle, the best fish of the season. The musical plash of falling water now salutes the ear, and we presently come to the “Mill Head Pool,” a magnificent tumbling bay, with a rare stream running through it, and full of big fish. Now, then, for the leger, and a capital place is this for its use. The water is sixteen feet deep in the middle, with a splendid gravelly bed, and there are large barbel,

bream, and chub, with plenty of perch and jack. To this place I made my way on my visit, determined to try some peculiarly attractive lobs I had in my basket, and my steps involuntarily quickened as I heard the splash of the falling water. To my disgust, when I got there there were twenty rods already at work, and fifty bathers making an infernal uproar lower down upon the gravelly shallows. I had unhappily chosen a Sunday, when half London makes for green fields and fresh air. Here the water in this direction ends, for a warning board denotes that on the other side of the lock bridge commences the exclusive water of "Digby's," or the "Flanders Weir Fishery;" so we will now follow the stream down to the left, and work back again to the house. In Wicks's time many celebrated spots existed between the tumbling bay and his domicile, but they seem now to have ceased to exist, and I tried in vain to find them. The whole of the water, however, speaks only too plainly of what might be done, were some care of it exercised. Large beds of rush and sedges are everywhere, growing right into the very middle of the stream in some places, and half-choking up the flow of the river. What haunts for jack and perch! Deep holes every now and then, sharps and shallows, literally overgrown with a dense crop of aquatic verdure, slow, deep stretches of water, overhanging banks, the very place to shelter large fish, yet everywhere overrun with a horde of folks with rod and line, who will massacre most ruthlessly every tiny fin they can bag, and above all there is the whispered suspicion of the net.



## THE PIKE AND ANCHOR FISHERY.

THE "Pike and Anchor" Tavern, the head-quarters of the subscribers to this fishery, is situated on the navigable part of the Lea, and is only a few minutes' walk from the Ponders' End station on the Great Eastern Railway; indeed, the house can be seen from the line as the train runs into the station. It was many years ago in the hands of Mr. Jewison, and following him came Mr. Tucker. At present the house and its adjacent waters are leased to Mr. Girdler—evidently the right man in the right place. The house, to the stranger coming along the straight cut of the navigable stream, presents an exceedingly prim, square-cut aspect, and with a row of dwarf limes in its front, squat and stunted in appearance, the wooden seats and tables set out in their shade, gives one the idea of the "pubs" to be found on the verge of the canals of Holland. It only wants the addition of half a dozen fat Dutchmen, with long pipes, to be quite in keeping with the general exterior. Anglers, as a rule, are men of moderate requirements, and the fare that is served here is both excellent and ample, while neat and cleanly bedrooms are at the disposal of those who, attracted by the extremely pretty scenery, as well as the really excellent fishing, feel

tempted to prolong their stay for a day or two. Mr. Girdler charges only half a guinea for season tickets and one shilling per day for day tickets—moderate terms enough, in all conscience. I would recommend the stranger to this fishery to enlist the services of Tom Searle, the keeper. He is an extremely civil fellow, knows the water thoroughly, and is, besides, a practical angler, and hates a netter as I hope he does his Satanic Majesty. We will make our way through the bar, and across an immense room that will be found at the rear of the house, adapted for dining almost any number of excursionists, and through the window on to the lawn. Here we must stop a moment, and have a peep at the roses and the well-filled greenhouse, and then, attracted by the murmur and ripple of the swift stream that skirts the gardens, wend our way by the thick privet hedge that bounds the ornamental grounds, separating them from the water, peeping over now and again, between the willows, to catch sight of a patriarchal chub or two lying head up stream, slowly moving their broad tails, and keeping their place to an inch in the swift current. This is the back-water, or part of the old river, and to my mind unquestionably the best part of the fishery. It is varied in its features the whole of the way one follows its sinuous course. Now sharps and shallows, with the river rippling over beds of yellow gravel and sand; all dace ground to a certainty, and, may be, a stray trout or so. Then a deep hole, then another scour, and so on. But hold! we must cross the stile, and get into the

kitchen garden. Close to the stile are some wooden steps that jut out into the water, here on the gravel are shoals of delicious Lea gudgeon; and, when fried crisp and yellow with good butter, together with the adjuncts of a dash of lemon over them, brown bread and butter and a pint bottle of Guinness', these little fellows are a dish fit to set before a king. In the second meadow from the house, and at the foot of the third pollard from the stile, we come to the first good roach swim, seven feet deep, with a bottom of hard, fine sand. Just below it, at the tail of the swim, in fact, the plummet finds a deep hole, and this spot will, in the proper season, pay for both legering and the use of the paternoster, for plenty of chub and perch of fair size are to be met with. Good roach water is found all down this meadow side, and presently a single little hawthorn hanging over the stream claims attention. Well it may, for it shelters a deep, at the bottom of which are some rare big chub. The angler, sitting well out of sight, should cast his leger a little below the bush, and then bring it towards him, so that the bait is resting as nearly under the bush as is possible. One remark about chub fishing may be made at this point—"Don't stop long in one place." These fish rove about, and if they are there and mean to feed, they will do it at once, or not at all. Just below this bush, an old tree, with not a leaf upon it, covered though with a profuse growth of the climbing nightshade, with great bunches of its sickly smelling purple flowers, and almost looking as though the clambering *plant* had choked the natural vitality of the tree

in its poisonous embrace, points out another deep chub haunt, but it is somewhat difficult to get at. It will repay, however, for extra trouble, and is worth trying. Fly water alone succeeds until we come to the fourth pollard willow counting from the bend—a very acute one—at the end of the meadow limit. At this spot is an excellent roach swim, tenanted by shoals of large silvery-sided fellows, and really a very taking spot to the eye. Searle tells me that it has never had any particular name, although it has a reputation amongst the subscribers, but I may say that its christening has now been solemnly celebrated, and for the future it will be called “The Fourth Tree Swim”—depth five feet, bottom hard gravel. At the next tree, the third from the bend, is the well-known “Barbel Hole,” and that the fish are in it is beyond doubt. I personally saw some fish there that, I will venture to say, were seven or eight pounds apiece, and Searle tells me they are there of ten and twelve pounds. In this very hole Mr. Gant, the celebrated Thames barbel fisher, has “circumwented,” as an old-fashioned Lea rodster used to say, many a crafty fish, and once took, although at a spot some sixty yards lower down the stream, seventeen good fish in a short space; but no one ever tries for them now seemingly, so they increase and multiply in peace, and have not the temptations offered them that are thrown in the way of their brethren in the Thames. More’s the pity, for they must succumb with patience, and what “a merry mill” it would be with one of the giants! Just below the Barbel Hole the stranger, wending his way down the

mead, will notice a very distinctly marked depression in the bank, evidently where a part of it has given way and fallen into the river. An old willow once shot its long roots downwards here, but the barbel had so burrowed and rooted the earth away with their bearded snouts from under the roots of the tree, that at last it fell, and now lies at the bottom of the stream. This would be just the place that these artful old fellows would run to if they were hooked, so that, having warned the angler of this "tackle trap," he will doubtless, should he be lucky enough to get one "on," try his "level best," to work him up the stream instead of down. At the extremity of the bend is a very deep hole, and large jack lie here, under the reed and sedge covers on the opposite side. There are as well two good roach swims, which cannot fail to attract notice, and then comes fly water only until we get to Mar Dyke, a ditch which divides Middlesex and Essex, and their parishes of Chingford and Enfield. Here the water ends, and a portion of Digby's commences. At the mouth of this ditch is a noted lay-by for jack, and I am told that a brace of fish are always to be had there. This ditch is, doubtless, a very valuable breeding place for fish, especially jack and perch, and the keeper has all his work cut out during the spawning season to watch the too frequent loafer, who, under the pretence of, "I'm only a gatherin' of a few creeses, master," watches for an opportunity, slips his bit of copper wire on to the end of his stick, and fetches papa and mamma jack out in a twinkling, and, perhaps,

just at the commencement of the honeymoon, the vagabond !

"Chingford Hill," gloriously wooded, and a long undulating chain of hills and ridges, stretches away in our front, affording to a lover of rural scenery great gratification. Having feasted our eyes for awhile, and noted the swarms of roach and dace sailing in and out between the stems of the lilies growing in rare profusion in Mar ditch, we will return to the water. Turning to the right, we push up the towing-path, now return to the house, and have a look at the other portion of the path, and notice a stream that branches off to the left. This is the "mill tail," from Messrs. Wright and Young's mill. To get to this the river in front of the house must be crossed by the aid of a punt, always at the use of the subscribers, and a very celebrated swim called "The Timbers" is found, from which some large hauls of roach have been made. Big fish, barbel, bream, and chub lie in this mill tail, although they are seldom taken, as nearly all the Lea fishers are roach men only ; consequently if one of these rattling fellows is hooked a break ensues. At the head of this stream is the "Mill Pool," a handsome and expansive sheet of water, and oh ! the thumpers that are there ! This is not, however, in the fishery limits, though it is just possible that permission could be obtained by an application to the proper source, though not, I am told, on a Sunday, on any consideration. We now pass the lock-gates, getting another fine panorama of the Chingford Hills to the right, with deep, heavy water in the river on our left,

and "jacky" in character up to the point where the millstream, after winding a tortuous course, again enters the main river. This spot will be always celebrated, from the fact that it was chosen by Bailey, the great Nottingham angler, upon the occasion of his fishing Woodard, the London champion, for a heavy stake some years ago. The river here is broad, and doubtless suited the Nottingham style of angling very well, whilst the exponent of the long roach rod and light hair line, Woodard, chose a spot nearer the locks. Strange to say, the Londoner was beaten on his own water when it was thought to be any odds on him, and then beat Bailey on the Trent, and again most signally when they fished the decider in the Stour at Bures. I have heard an amusing tale *à propos* of Woodard and Bates, another famous Lea rod, when the former went down to the Trent accompanied by Bates, to have a look over the water, and try his hand. They were fishing one day, and Woodard was hooking and killing great roach every swim, much to the amazement of a crowd of country folks, who had come down to the water to see "the chap from London as had come to fish our Bailey." Quoth Bates to Woodard, "Joe, they've boiled this cauliflower a bit too soft, I can hardly keep it on my hook." They were fishing with paste. Woodard very gravely assented, and the news was flashed all over Nottingham that "them chaps were a catchin' 'em wi' cauliflower." An excellent swim for roach is exactly opposite the millstream, on the towing-path side, and then some two hundred yards

further on is the "Crab-Tree Swim," nine feet deep, and with a clean gravel bottom, more adapted, however, for winter fishing than for trials of patience in the summer. When the roach are "on" this swim has many a time been a bone of contention among the anglers, who have, perhaps, been trying hard to get there first, and then on their arrival found that some earlier bird had obtained the coveted spot. Every step finds eminently fishable water, up to the point, where the "Stile Swim"—another good spot—is situate. Well marked on the bank, there is little chance of missing this, and if the angler in the winter-time finds it unoccupied it should not be passed. It has a uniform depth of ten feet, is free from weed, has an excellent level bottom, and plenty of good fish are to be found there. Then two hundred yards above is the "Gate Swim," exactly opposite to the five-barred gate set in the high hawthorn hedge that divides the wide towing path—almost like a high road here—from the cultivated fields on the right hand. This swim holds plenty of chub as well as roach, and is good ground for the leger into the bargain. Opposite the haystack yonder (and one has always been there for ages, owing to some manorial agreement between the owner and the holder of the land) is the "Haystack Swim," at one time the crack swim of the place. Its reputation is, however, not so good as it used to be, and it is thought that the fish do not, for some undefined reason, lie here now as much as they did in bygone days, although why they should not I am at a loss to know. It



is a good swim, very deep, and the surrounding views are picturesque in the extreme, and for these reasons it was doubtless a favourite sitting. Some little distance above, towards Enfield Lock, a place is pointed out where Mr. Rich took in one day a jack over ten pounds, and a trout of six pounds ten ounces, besides a large bag of other fish. They must have been pretty well on that day, at any rate. Mill Marsh Lane, which seems to have been an old roadway from Sewardstone, now shows its outlet upon the towing path, and opposite the entrance to the lane is a famous roach swim that has been enormously prolific of bags of handsome fish. Passing this, the "Upper Gate Swim," and the ancient "Wash"—all famous localities—we come to where the old river joins the navigable stream. Above this spot, and in the pool beyond the horse-bridge, is a place celebrated as being the scene of many a trying tussle between the patient angler with fine hands and tackle on the one side, and some of the many giants that lurk in the depths of this sullen, gloomy pool on the other. None more brilliant, however, than that of my friend Mr. Gant, who took one day three glorious bream weighing fourteen pounds, the best fish being full six pounds, and a trout of four pounds four ounces. These bream were the first that had been had from the water, were all taken with Nottingham float tackle, well-scoured lobbs for bait, and doubtless a good ground baiting of chopped lobbs before commencing fishing. Again, a very few days afterwards, this take of fish was further augmented by the capture of six barbel weighing

thirty-six pounds, that fell to this noted rod from the same pool, and were angled for by the same method. These examples must, I think, prove that the Lea holds in its deeps, and places that are never fished from one year's end to the other, many large fish that perhaps seldom, if ever, leave their chosen haunts, the deep, still backwaters, or the frothing, foaming current of the mill head. They are, as I have before remarked, never angled for scientifically, with the observant fisherman's knowledge of their habits and mode of life, pitted against the sagacity and cunning of these, the oldest inhabitants of the stream. I would that it were different, and that a few of the good Thames men, who know how to fish for barbel and the bigger class of the finny tribe generally, would give the little Lea a turn. The fish are there, that is certain ; one wants no punt to fish it, with 'bacca and beer-loving puntsmen to consider ; and just as pretty spots can be found for the exercise of the "patient man's" skill as upon the broad Thames, and many of them almost within the sound of Bow bells.

## A FINAL CHAT ON THE LEA.

IN these pages I have dealt with the best-known angling places on the Lea, and most reluctantly turn my back on this charming and prolific river in search of "fresh fields and pastures new." There are, however, many delightful nooks situated on the banks of old Isaac's favourite stream that I might, perhaps, have descanted upon did I not fear to weary the indulgent reader ; many places possessing charms of scenery that, painted by a more gifted pen than mine, might almost afford excuse for prolonging my task, yet they would hardly be the localities I should visit in search of sport. When the present series was commenced I had in my mind the special object of pointing out to anglers places within easy reach of home, where they might get decent fishing at a reasonable expense, and, when upon the water, "swims" that might be selected with a fair chance of getting some reward for the day's exertions. I shall be amply recompensed if my brother craftsman, perhaps knowing as little as I did at one time of specific places, and the selected and favoured resorts of the regular *habitué*, has profited by the hints I have been enabled to give him. No one who has seen much of the Lea and its anglers can fail to detect the great difference that exists between the crack rodsters of this river and those

of the Thames and Trent, the latter, of course, more particularly. Here, nineteen out of every twenty are roach fishers, and seem to totally ignore the existence of far nobler game, although they are perhaps under their very noses. Let it not, however, be supposed that I decry the Lea fisherman—far from it—as a roach angler no one can touch him. Take the best man that can be found upon any other stream, and set him down upon a Lea swim against such men as Woodard, Bates, Da Costa, Hackett, Tom Hughes, Benjamin—ay, twenty more that I could name—and I'll venture to say the stranger at the end of the day "would not be in the same street." Many of them can hold their own as "all round" anglers; but it is doubtless owing to their incessant practice with the roach rod that the Lea men have gained the reputation that they unquestionably hold as fishermen of the first water in this particular branch of the art, and to a stranger who watches one of the "cracks" for an hour, when the roach are fairly on, it is simply a matter of wonderment. He sees fish after fish hooked and killed, when the delicate quill, on which, perhaps, he has kept his eyes intently fixed, has hardly betrayed the least symptom of a nibble. Again, on no other river does one see the fisher adopt the same tactics practised here of disjoining the long eighteen or twenty foot rod after every swim or two, and nipping tight round the shot a bit of his stiff bread and bran; and, curiously enough, although I have tried this method on many another stream, I never found it succeed so decisively as

on the Lea ; why, I cannot tell. I shall never forget my own astonishment, many years ago, when I first watched the Lea style of legering for roach, where the angler, fishing a deep slow eddy, takes a lump of this tough, stiff, groundbait, as big nearly as a billiard ball, and, making a hole in it with his thumb, pops his pea of white paste into the hollow made, then, closing up the bread and bran round the hook, lowers it quietly down to the bottom. The big roach sail round and round this ball of groundbait, and first one has a peck at it then another until they disclose the bit of paste ; then it's about ten to one a real "grouser" bolts it. The Thames chub fisher throws out his leger into mid stream, the Lea man fishes at the extreme edge of the water, perhaps not a yard from the bank, contriving to get his bait under some overhanging bush or tree, sitting right away from the river, and gets many a time some topping fish by nightfall. In a stroll on Lea side, one frequently comes across a man on ahead whose movements, seen from a distance, look remarkably suspicious to say the least of it. There he stands, motionless, with bent, stooping figure, rod held aloft, and one wonders what on earth he can be at. Getting nearer, one sees a long line caught by the gentle sou'-west breeze, wafted slowly out across the stream, and a bluebottle, perhaps, fastened to a tiny hook, drops, light as a kiss on a baby's cheek, on the surface. A rise, a splash, and with an almost imperceptible movement of the wrist, the dainty dace is hooked, and in another moment lies on the grass at its captor's feet. This man is

wedded firmly to the "blow line," and nothing can tempt him to desert what he knows is a most killing lure for any other method. Crouching behind the next clump of willows, and peering in the depths below, from between the long feathery branches pendent to the water, is the sly "dibber," with his cockroach, or big black humble bee, yellow ribbed, with deep orange bands of colour. Many a fight with the great chub under the boughs has this old fellow, and many chuckles does he indulge in when his prey, tempted to the surface by the "dibble, dibble" of the fly, makes a dash at it, then stops short, eyes it, sucks it down, and after a good hard fight, at last lies safe among the moss and rushes. Thanks to the liberality of the Great Eastern Company, members of angling societies, armed with a "privilege ticket," can travel to any of the well-known fishing stations, and back again, for a single fare, and I am delighted to hear that other of the great companies are following the example so generously set them—the South-Western and Great Western Companies to wit, opening up all the glorious reaches of the great parent river. It is an extraordinary sight to see the interior of Liverpool Street Station on a Sunday morning when the early trains are starting. Fishermen, fishermen everywhere, and what a variety! Here the little pale-faced weaver from the looms of Bethnal Green, there cane chair workers, shoemakers, stonemasons, literally hundreds of men, all of them with "labour" stamped on hands and clothes, as plainly as a calling can possibly be stamped. There is a man with a wisp of black

neckerchief tied loosely round his throat, his coat thin and threadbare, shod as to one foot with a Wellington, the other with a Blucher, and perhaps a big hole or two for the purpose of ventilation ; happy, though, as a king ; and presently we shall find him on a good swim, an angler every inch of him, and despite his threadbare coat and ventilating boots, in his hand he carries a first chop cane roach rod and tackle as good as can be had for money. How much the next week's hard work is brightened as he sits at his loom by the recollections of "the spanking roach he had last Sunday from the 'Half-Moon Swim' no one knows but he;" and wont he go again next Sunday, even if he has to pinch himself a bit to do it ! He will, you may depend on't. For quiet, sylvan beauty, deep water, and utter seclusion from "the busy haunts of men," no place on the Lea can eclipse "Digby's Water," or the "Old Flanners Weir Fishery." It is situated on the old river, and adjoins that part of the stream formerly in the occupation of Benjamin Wicks, and after winding in and out among the meadows, falls into the "Pike and Anchor" water just above Mar Dyke. The stranger, reaching the head of this fishery, cannot fail to be at once attracted by the great beauty of the place. One passes the "Mill Head Pool" at the top of Wicks' water, and beyond, scarce a hundred yards, comes to a deep pool, spanned by a rickety little wooden bridge, with the keeper's cottage on the far side. Large trees on both sides of the stream arch over the water, almost shutting out the sunshine, and casting deep sombre shadows, from the overhanging

foliage, over the still surface of the pool, dimpled now and again by the rise of a big fish from its depths. These very heavy waters shelter great thick-backed chub, and ponderous bream and barbel, while they look what they, doubtless, are, the chosen haunts of some of the best specimens of the Lea jack. Here, however, one cannot get a day's fishing; season tickets only are granted, and altogether it is an exclusive water, and most jealously watched and guarded. Sleeping accommodation cannot be had, and the subscriber must take his own provisions for the day, beer included, although I am told that a chop or steak is well cooked at the keeper's abode before-mentioned, supposing that the angler has brought it with him. Again, Bailey's Fishery, easily reached from the Ponders' End Station, is a lovely bit of backwater, and holds some excellent fish, and here one can get a day ticket for a shilling, and occasionally fair return for the outlay. This is another bit of the Lea that has always had a great reputation for the size and numbers of its barbel, but they are wary to a degree, and would, I am convinced, want a lot of both patience and good baiting up before they fed freely. Again, this water in the summer months, particularly when it has been dry weather for any length of time, suffers from the drought, and although the winter floods puts this all square again, I cannot help thinking that the fish must work elsewhere, where they are less likely to suffer from "short commons" in the shape of water. Beresford's water, in the marshes at Hackney, had some years ago an extraordinary



reputation for the size and quality of its fish. Here there used to be barbel like pigs, and chub of enormous weight. I have heard of them being taken seven pounds in weight, but one does not hear nowadays of big bags; and yet I fancy, if the keen fishers that are up and down the banks of the stream day after day had one among them who was the hero of a notable capture, it would be soon noised about, and all the angling world would have, to use a bit of slang, "the full strength of it." There used to be, in the large room at the White House, the trysting place for the subscribers to this water, a really grand collection of preserved fish, and all of them from the water attached to the house. In this room one could sit after the day was over, and, while puffing out clouds of fragrant smoke from a long churchwarden, with a can of good home-brewed at one's elbow, admire specimens of half the finny tribe—huge trout and jack here, barbel and immense bream and carp there, perch and chub—indeed a goodly collection. It is many years ago now since I was on this water, and I know not whether the museum may still grace the walls of the old hostelrie, but if they do they are worth a day's journey, in an angler's point of view, simply to look at. Further north Ware affords at times good fishing, although it was never a very favourite spot of mine; still there is some good water there, though much of it is in private hands and difficult of access. Below the Gauge House there is a magnificent "Tumbling Bay," with a fine fall of water into the deep pool below it, and I am assured there are some

very heavy trout inhabiting the gleaming depths, joint tenants with some spanking chub and barbel. And now I regretfully lay down my pen, and bid farewell to these recollections of many a long and sunny day spent by the side of this, the best and most charming stretch of water to be found close home ; to remembrances of many a glorious summer's eve that has found me at Lea side, quietly ensconced in some favourite nook, the fish feeding freely, and where, as I have sat bathed in the soft mellow light of an English sunset, with no sound near save the tinkle of the bell-wether feeding with the white-fleeced flock in the meadow behind—the plunge of a big fish in the beds of weed, spangled with a verdant crop of the white starwort, the whistle of the blackbird in the copse, or the cheery song of the labourer plodding home through the fields, all the carking cares of business life—all the petty jealousies, and meannesses, that seem to cling inseparably to the present, in the hurried race for bread and fame, to one's kind—all these dead, and blotted out in the Great Past, while one's heart sings high with thanks to the Eternal Maker, who, deigning to give one health and strength at least, to enjoy the glorious works of His hand, sends in a scene like this, the sweet calm of peace and goodwill to wearied men ; and, as the grey light of the evening deepens, and the stars begin to peep out in the dappled sky, how happily one turns for home with a heavy basket.

## THE WELSH HARP FISHERY, HENDON.

I HAD heard a good deal of talk lately about the attractive qualities of this fishery, and bearing in mind an excellent take of bream and perch I had there upon the occasion of my last visit, now some five or six years ago, I made up my mind to have another turn. I provided myself with a good supply of lobs—the best bait one can take for this water—and, hailing the first passing Hansom, rattled off to Moorgate Street, *en route* for Hendon. Once there, the water is in front, not two minutes' walk from the station. Mr. Warner has made the place a very charming suburban retreat, and visitors will find here, apart from the attractions of the fishery, much to admire and much to amuse them. Flower beds, exquisitely laid out; cool, shady nooks; very pretty scenery, boating to the heart's content, and, at times, good fishing. To the left hand of the ornamental grounds, at the back of the house, will be found the great dining-hall—a vast room, capable of accommodating any number of hungry folks, and where one can sit down to an excellent dinner, capitally served at a most reasonable price—no little boon this to an angler on a cold day. Here will be found a valuable museum of stuffed birds, and fish taken from the lake, together with a wonderful collection of *curios* col-

lected from all parts of the globe—Australian waddies and boomerangs, the deadly Malay creese, Affghan spears, bows of all shapes, and cruel-looking bone-headed arrows, crocodiles, snakes, Rush the murderer's shaving-pot, &c. ; while some very valuable paintings, and one in particular of Haydon's, may well claim a moment's attention. Leaving the house behind, let us have a walk round the great sheet of water, covering three hundred and fifty-two acres of land, and tenanted by some huge fish without any question. The river Brent, a favourite place of mine in boyhood's days, and out of which I have taken many a good perch and flat-sided, unwieldy bream ere now, runs right through the centre of the lake, and its more immediate course is just under the platform from which the boating parties start. Following the roadway to the right of the house one comes to Brent Bridge, which spans the exact course of the river. Here, if the day is fine, and a hot sun out, the best day of all others for success, in this lake the angler should stop and peer over the bridge amongst the weeds to the left, and, if he sees such a shoal of huge carp as I saw there, sunning themselves, shouldering one another about, and half out of the water, it will make his fingers itch to begin. There they lay, fifty or sixty fish, I have little doubt, and some of them of great weight. Mr. Warner, I should imagine, possesses a treasure of a keeper in the person of Sawyer, the custodian of the lake, an intelligent and most civil man, who told me while strolling round the place that he had taken a carp out from this weed bed during the spawning season, and in

a very sickly state, that weighed just fifteen pounds, and another later on of far greater weight ; while I hear that a member of the Stanley Anglers took a very large fish from this identical corner of the lake, and which now forms one of that body's capital museum. Just outside the weed beds there are several deep holes, the haunts, no doubt, of these great golden-sided fellows, and a punt would be required, of which there are plenty at hand, to fish them properly. It would be useless to throw out over the weeds, for certain wreckage of the best tackle would ensue, and equally certain loss of the fish. A subscriber to the water told me it was impossible to get these crafty gentlemen. This I do not believe. Carp can be taken as easily as any other of the finny tribe, but they must be angled for in a different style altogether to, say roach, &c., and unless the fisher gives some consideration to the habits of this water fox, and fishes for him with suitable and proper bait, he might just as well stay at home, and fish in the water-butt. Passing through the swing gate we get into the meadow, skirt the edge of these weed beds, and then we come to some rails stretching out into the lake. Several of these flights of rails will be found ; and round the extremity of each of them, just where the water laps over the top, are all favourite spots, particularly for perch. These fish do not take minnows at all well here, perhaps because they are foreign to the water. Lobs are the best bait that can be used, and plenty of them are required. It is useless to have a hundred or two ; for a long

day a thousand at least are required, and the tail end only should be used for the hook, picking out the flat, silvery worm, with a red vein running to the extremity of the tail, which fishermen call the "maiden lob." These rails can only be effectually fished from a punt, and here is a wrinkle worth knowing. The slightest breeze blowing across the vast expanse of this lake, soon raises a sea, and miniature waves with little white caps. Now, if the depth be p'umbed, so that the bait just touches the bottom, as is usual elsewhere, the waves must wash the float in, and as it rises to the swell of the water, of course takes the bait off the bottom; fish then a foot at least on the ground, hence, although the bait may drag it will not lift. It frequently happens that very large tench are taken while angling for perch in this way, and several have been caught of great size here; one, Sawyer tells me, that scaled four pounds and a half. Crossing the first rails we get into the second meadow, and all along are dense weed beds, affording quiet and shelter for the jack, of which there are any quantity. The most likely method to get at these gentlemen in the weedy season is to use the dead gorge, dipping in here and there in any little open spot among the watery vegetation. Good high water-boots would be required, however, for the edge is very sloppy and marshy, and I need hardly say what a desideratum dry feet are at any time. We now come to the "Long Rails," that stretch half across the lake, and this place is celebrated as the scene of some great takes of

very large perch by Mr. Stead of "Cure" celebrity, and Mr. Randall, another star in the comic line of business—both of them first-rate practical anglers. I had the pleasure of meeting the latter gentleman at dinner when I was over the water ; afterwards he kindly invited me to share his punt for the afternoon, and a very pleasurable time we had. We did not get many fish it is true, for the wind blew a hurricane, and it was as much as we could do to keep the floats in the water. Before starting Mr. Randall begged my acceptance of a new spinning bait for jack, trout, perch, &c. ; at any rate it was new to me. It is admirably made from nickel silver, very highly polished, and has this great advantage, that it never tarnishes. It can be used in dead water, equally as well as in stream, and works upon its own axis—a strong pin, running through the centre of the bait, with the most beautiful regularity. It is the invention of a Mr. Gregory, and deserves the patronage of all admirers of a really good spinner. I should think it would be invaluable in coloured water, from its great brilliancy. Since these pages were written Mr. Gregory has greatly improved upon the bait I have just noticed, and his "Oxford" and "Colorado" baits are now as nearly perfection as possible, although I think they would be much better without the flying triangle at the side. The next good point is the well-known "Gravel Hole," famous for its roach and bream. The whole of this bank, particularly when the water is low, affords very good fishing, and frequent breaks of tight, fine lines ensue when *the leviathans* are feeding. It really seems absurd

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for men to fish a place where heavy fish are known to lie with tight hair lines, yet somehow the London angler seems wedded to this style, and will not discard it, let his experience be ever so mortifying. Now and again a monster comes to bank, and the fortunate angler is glorified in the columns of *Bell*, yet for one fish taken, a dozen break away, and all for want of taking a little extra trouble. Lots of bream lie here, and of great weight. The bottom is hard, solid gravel, and the swims at the extremity of a long rod average about five to six feet, although there are deep holes where one can find fourteen to sixteen feet of water. Out in the middle it is a terrible depth, in many places thirty feet, and some of the heaviest jack have bit gimp from this deep water. It seems the usual plan here to threadle the bait, but I prefer snap tackle at all times. The dace or gudgeon is less injured, and one loses far fewer fish when the run does come, and can strike as soon as the float has gone down. By the other method, one has to wait on till the bait is gorged, and it often happens, too, when the fish are in a playing humour, that the jack drops it before he has run ten yards. Two hundred yards above the Gravel Hole is the "Stump Hole," so called from the fact that before the enlargement of the reservoir a little wood grew down here to the water's edge. This was cut down, and a large slice of the bank and fields beyond laid under contribution. This hole, again, has a great reputation for the size of the bream lying there, and very pretty views are got from this point of the handsomely wooded Monastery Fields upon the opposite shore. At the top end of the water



the Sluice House, built out from a wall of very heavy solid masonry, will be seen, and from this wall good bream fishing is frequently obtained, though better places may be found higher up the path we are now pursuing. Rounding the extensive bend of the lake, and some half a mile from the Sluice House, will be found another of the characteristic stretches of rails, and these being in the Monastery Fields previously mentioned, are called the "Monastery Rails." Here there are very deep holes, and perch of large size find quiet lodgings therein. Water from twelve to twenty feet deep can be found round these rails, but the exact locality of the deep places can hardly be pointed out, so that, failing Sawyer's services being obtained, the stranger must rely very much upon his plummet to get upon the correct pitch. Entering upon the next meadow, we get to the "Ploughed Field Swims," and these are looked upon as quite the crack localities of the place. There, again, the large bream "do love to congregate," and it is a favourite ground for the jack fisher. One finds water varying from five to ten and twelve feet deep, hard gravelly bottom, free and clear from weed or other obstructions, and no better place can be selected for general bottom-fishing than this point. I should certainly advise the use of running tackle in any case, for on no day can the angler rely upon what may come next. Fishing, perhaps, with gentles, one may for an hour or two be getting little roach. Suddenly, without the least warning, the big ones come "on," and at the next baiting the float *slides off*, and the angler is fast in a whacking

bream or heavy carp, and then where are you with a tight line? A man to succeed well must try hard; then why, in the name of Fate, lose a fish that may be, in its case, "a thing of beauty, and a joy for ever," all for the sake of not taking a little more trouble, and using a rod with rings, instead of the everlasting white cane without? I have said little or nothing as to the jack fishing here, and yet, as it is one of the principal attractions to the subscribers, it is only fair to give it a little attention. There can be no doubt that the water contains a great number of these game fish, and some of considerable size. One gentleman named Clark grassed twenty-three fish during the 1877 season; another, a Mr. Hooper, is credited with thirty-two, one fish scaling eleven pounds and a half, while a subscriber named Turner got one day, amongst others, a good fish of twelve pounds full weight. Again, Mr. Randall told me of a capital day's jacking that he and Mr. Stead had together. Spinning from a punt, and with Gregory's bait, these gentlemen killed thirty-one fish, Mr. Randall getting six in seven throws. Such results as these must tell their own tale, and there can be little doubt that on a favourable day, and under fair circumstances with regard to wind and weather, many places further from home than Hendon might compare unfavourably with it at the end of a day's outing. One thing is certain, the water is thoroughly taken care of by a good practical keeper, and restocked, year after year, by the proprietor with no niggardly hand. The charges for fishing it are very moderate—one shil-

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ling a day for bottom fishing, and two-and-six-pence for that and jack fishing included. The keeper has always a good stock of livebait on hand. A punt for the day, with rowlocks fitted so that sculls can be used, can be procured for half-a-crown. There is an immense sheet of water to choose from, and I think if the reader takes a good stock of lobs, and quietly fishes the places I have pointed out, while a livebait plays its own part on either side of the punt, he may, if he gets anything like decent weather, come to the conclusion that there are worse places near London than Hendon.

THE  
THAMES AT HAMPTON COURT,  
TAGG'S ISLAND FISHERY,  
AND  
JOTTINGS ON THE MOLE.

AN hour's ride from town, per South Western Railway from Waterloo, brings us to Hampton Court and its endless attractions, chief among them to visitors being the fine old Palace, with its long corridors of tapestried rooms, hung with oils from the cunning hands of some of the great masters of a bygone age, recalling England's bravest and best; and then the calm, peaceful river is flashing in the bright sunshine, giving promise to the angler of his spending a pleasant day with his pipe and his rod in some of the quiet nooks that can be found between its station and the next halting place, Sunbury. Perhaps the greatest annoyance to the Thames bank angler during the summer season are the boating parties. A man comes down overnight, and is up by peep of day, or travels by an early train, and has in his mind's eye some little spot where he thinks he can get a few fish, and his heart beats high with hope upon nearing the swim to find that it is unoccupied. Down he sits, his tackle is unpacked, and his rod put together in a twinkling; he gets his depth the

first try with the plummet, and he chuckles to himself, and thinks how little he has disturbed his swim. In goes the groundbait, and he lights his pipe. This man gets, perhaps, one holiday from hard, grinding toil, every six months, and how delighted he is with this lovely, cool morning, as he thinks of the gloomy, grimy "shop," and contrasts that, and its dingy aspect, with the peaceful quiet around him and the soft grey light on the river. The fish are, perhaps, in a feeding humour, and two or three silvery dace and a thumping red-eyed roach are lying side by side on the wet flags in the basket ; and then comes a bream, a good two-pounder at the least, and this fellow tries the tight hair line a bit, but is netted at last, and how this man does crow to himself ! The hours slip by, ten, eleven o'clock, and then a change comes o'er the scene. "Hi, hi, do you hear there, you sir ?" The fisherman, whose eyes have been intently fixed on his float, looks up, to find coming round the bend at racing pace an eight-oared boat, perhaps some local club out for practice, and rushing clean over his swim. Piscator waves his hand, motioning them further out in the stream. "Don't you wish you may get it," seems to be the coxswain's idea, and he leans back, with his rudder lines in his hands, and the eight-oared racer goes tearing by, the surf washing up the bank, and the swim is effectually settled, for a time at any rate. Ten minutes afterwards, "Hi, hi, sir," is again shouted, and this time a wretched screw of a horse, ridden by a lad, comes at a jog trot over the green sward, with a long rope attached to a pole fixed in the fore part of a sub-

stantial boat. Seated in it is Pater in a huge straw hat—Mater looking jolly as she leans back on the cushions—"the girls" in white muslin, and Jack, home from school, with a rod in his hand, and a spinner of some sort trailing forty yards behind. Then comes a perfect flotilla of all kinds of boats. Some of the *jeunesse* of the period habit themselves in garments of strange and wondrous kind, looking, in white guernseys, with very broad violet or scarlet stripes, bands of yellow on white ground, tight knickerbockers and huge scarlet worsted nightcaps, very like a hybrid between the brigand of the transpontine stage and the nearly extinct type of the drayman, erstwhile attendant on the disembarkation of Barclay and Perkins's beer barrels. This class of boating man one sees frequently harnessed to the long rope, in lieu of the aforesaid screw, with some lovely English girl faces, muffled up to the neck in some gauzy material—and though it is a scorching day this swathing business is the correct thing, and *must* be done—lolling back in the boat, and pretending to read a yellow-bound novel under the sunshades, while the brigands run up the bank in a painful state of perspiration, dragging the fair cargo behind them. One can easily imagine that, after this little game has been played for an hour or so, the unfortunate piscator does not get many more fish. So he packs up, disgusted, and seeks another swim. All this, however, as soon as the wintry winds begin to nip a little, is altered; the ephemera of the river vanish, and the rodster has it then very much to himself. Very excellent fishing is frequently obtained at Hampton

Court, and, if the barbel are at all well "on," a good catch can be had. There are plenty of punts and plenty of fishermen, and Wheeler, Davies, Rogerson, Milbourne, and Watford are all good, painstaking men, and try hard to insure their customers sport. A very excellent barbel swim is nearly opposite the lock-house in the main stream and parallel with the white stone wall that bounds the river upon the opposite side to the lock. Just at this spot I and a friend had a good day with the barbel with poor old "Count Tagg" for an attendant, as hard working a man as it was ever my lot to be out with, and I was shocked to hear that the poor fellow met with a severe accident the following day, from the effects of which he has been an inmate of Wandsworth Infirmary ever since. Just above is the weir, a splendid fall of water that comes in boiling, turbulent flood, over the shoot, and shelters some grand fish in its foamy depths. Many a goodly Thames trout, king of the stream, lies here, and some ponderous barbel and chub, with roach and dace galore in the quieter water. To the right of the weir looking up the river, the visitor will notice the mouth of a stream, it is a shallow stretch of water, rippling over a gravel bed that would afford good opportunity for the fly rod, and it is a good tip in the event of the river being much disturbed by boats to push the punt over these shallows. It is precious hard work though, and if the water is low one must wade to get the punt over, and at the head is found the "Back Weir," a charming little pool with a good stream. And here again are

some whacking chub and barbel, and plenty of perch. This pool in the early part of the season nearly always holds a trout or two, and one of the earliest fish bagged on the river, if not the very first, last season was taken spinning here by one of Wheeler's customers. From the difficulty experienced in getting boats over the shallows one can get comparative quiet in this secluded little place, and I know of no more charming nook than can be found here, shaded as it is with fine trees, and with no noise save the plash of the sparkling stream behind. Thames puntmen have been frequently stigmatised by piscatorial writers as grasping, greedy, beer-swilling types of humanity—lazy, and utterly careless whether their customers get fish or no. True, I have found men on the river to whom such a description might properly apply; on the other hand, I find that if any of the well-known Thames men get customers who can fish, and know what they are doing, they never attempt imposition—share cheerfully the angler's fare, no matter what it may be, and work hard to insure him sport. Then, at the end of a good day, an extra half-crown is more appreciated than any amount of beer-guzzling, and few anglers would, I think, grudge a little *douceur* like this to a man who has shown all day that his interest in another's success had been keenly awakened.

We will suppose that we are starting from Hampton Bridge, a picturesque structure, with a little fleet of punts and boats drawn up on the gravelly shallows, and passing the Castle—an excellent inn this, by-the-by—are proceeding up



the towing-path towards the locks and the weir. Soon we catch the sound of the falling torrent, and passing the lockman's pretty cottage, with the old black sheep that has been here for many years, lying basking in the sun, we presently get opposite an island in the middle of the main stream. Twenty years ago, when I first recollect this place, it was called "Harvey's Ait," and was thickly covered with withies and rushes, through which one had to struggle with rod and creel in order to reach the swims. Harvey's house was an extraordinary tumble-down old shanty of the most primitive construction, and he used to set out an ordinary for the fishermen in a long kitchen, paved with red bricks, with here and there big holes in the floor showing the earth underneath. Capital dinners, however, they were for hungry men, generally winding up in the season with a tremendous fruit pudding of some sort. But the house and its dinners are things of the past, and the aspect of the island itself is greatly altered. Mr. Tagg has built unto himself a spacious and modern hotel, which faces the towing-path; it is, I can vouch for, replete with every comfort; he has, unquestionably, within the last few years greatly improved the fishery, and many excellent bags have been made on quiet days lately by anglers who know how to fish and use fine tackle. The swims here are somewhat peculiar, and are made in between the willow trees that hang over the water. They are kept thoroughly well raked, and free from weed, and there can be no doubt that heavy fish of nearly all classes, attracted by

the cleanly bottom, hang about the quiet shores of the island. In many places constant use by the anglers frequenting the place has worn down a little stand or platform in the bank, and thus the roach fisher can sit with his rod nearly on a level with the water, his eye catching the least tremor of the float far quicker than if he were seated higher, and thus had to look down upon it. Heavy bream are frequently banked from these swims, and I have seen lately some very good chub from the same locality. Roach there are in plenty, and of fair size and quality. Following the island round to the left hand from the hotel front, ten or a dozen swims present themselves, each sheltered in its nook of trees. I do not know that one is better than another, although they vary in depth; and then at the top of the island "The Deeps" will be found, very heavy water, as its name implies, and full of good perch and jack, awkward, however, to fish from the bank owing to the quantity of trees and shrubs that overhang the side. Even if the livebait is flung out, the great body of water swirls round the head of the island so strongly that the bait is swept to the side before it has well settled in the stream. Paternostering with a good sized lead would be the best plan to adopt, I should think, using small gudgeon and dace, or large minnows for bait, and particularly trying round the edge of the dense weed beds and underneath the boughs of the trees. A great advantage in paternostering is that, with practice, one can make the bait take any direction one may desire, and fish little holes and corners that could not be tried by

any other method. Rounding this end of the island with our faces again turned towards the hotel, "the backwater" lies to the left of us. This, in the summer time, is simply choked up with a tangled mass of aquatic verdure, so much so that it is awkward work to get a boat through in many places. Here, in the weeds and lay-byes, lots of jack find quiet haunts, and can only be got at by the dead gorge system, dipping the dace or gudgeon in the little holes between the lilies. There are several excellent roach swims down this side of the island, and one in particular at the foot of the first hawthorn bush, has a famous reputation. At this spot some few years ago I took an excellent basket of fish, several running over a pound. And here, again, chub seek the shelter of the overhanging bushes and the deep quiet water. I believe that Mr. Tagg has lately made arrangements with some one whose name I do not at the moment recollect, but who knows the water thoroughly, to look after the requirements of visitors to the island, and this little fact may be worthy of mention. Hampton Deep, higher up the river towards the Mill, are famous for their bream fishing, and for the jack that hang about the quiet secluded nooks to be found on either side of the stream. A fish of this latter class, and weighing twenty-seven and a half pounds, was taken by one of Milbourne's customers last season, 1877. As the visitor runs into the railway station he sees to the left hand of the line an extremely picturesque mill pool, with a foaming cascade that tumbles with rapid flood over the dam. This is the main

stream of the "sullen Mole," so often the subject of the poet's pen, and no wonder, for I know of no stream where one may wander, following its tortuous, winding course, that presents more charming, delightful views at almost every step than does this little river. Here at the Mill Pool it is a broad, powerful stream ; anon, as one follows its course through the meadows one finds it a mere rivulet, almost narrow enough to jump over ; then it ripples and flashes over a gravelly bed with pleasant murmur like children's laughter ; next instant into a deep, sullen, gloomy-looking pool, across which the overhanging trees throw heavy shadows, dark as night ; in some places lit up by a long ray of sunshine, glancing down through the quivering leaves, and looking gloriously bright in contrast with the previous gloom. And, my brothers of the angle, let me tell you that there are, in these deep holes, some rare fish awaiting him who knows how to get them, bream of immense size, and plenty of them—great, thick-backed chub, perch, jack, roach, carp, and tench. It is next to useless, however, attempting the capture of these patriarchs of the stream by the ordinary method of angling. Now and again I have come across a London fisherman in some one of the scores of quiet, secluded places, to be found on the Mole between Hampton and Esher, who has just basketed one of the thumping bream that make these deep holes their home, and, delighted with his capture, has proudly displayed his prize at my request, but rely upon it that no great hauls are ever made by the orthodox

long rod and tight line business. At present I am simply pointing out for the benefit of those who may not know of the delightful spots that may be found on this stream that such exist ; and, that although the river is, I am willing to admit, "fished to death," yet there are fish, and in plenty, that can be had by any one who knows how to set to work properly to ensnare them. Sunday is a bad day to fish here, the mills are all stopped, and the consequence is that the water is much lower than its ordinary height, and the fish shyer than ever. On a week day, however, with the adjuncts of fine weather, a balmy west, or, better still, a south-west wind, plenty of lob worms, and these used unsparingly, many worse places than some of the deep holes in the Mole might be tried. I will venture to say, too, that if the lightest of light legers be used, and the angler keeps very quiet and well out of sight, he is likely enough to receive such a shock through his running line as will wake him up thoroughly, if he is indulging in a day dream, or half nodding over his pipe.

## THE THAMES AT HALLIFORD. BREAM FISHING IN THE "CHALK HOLE."

ABOUT August, 1877, I had a capital day at Halliford Point with one of the Rosewells, an excellent fellow in every way as an attendant. Dull, cloudy weather, and a sou'-west wind set me again thinking as to the probabilities of another big day with the bream, so I determined upon trying them, and one morning found me *en route* for Waterloo. A Hansom soon rattled me down to Friar Street, Blackfriars, a region wherein bone-crushing establishments and knackers' yards preponderate, reeking with smells, the very antipodes of Rimmel's establishment ; but an excellent place wherefrom to lay up a store of "carrion" gentles, without which it is, perhaps, not wise to visit Halliford. I secured a capital lot of them, and as many liver gentles, fat, yellow fellows, for three-pence as I should have obtained from any of the tackle shops for a shilling. With these, and a rare bag of scoured lobbs, I felt pretty well fortified, and soon left the anything but ambrosial gales wafted down Friar Street behind, and found myself nicely in time for a glass of beer at the station, and the 2.35 for Shepperton.

Halliford is a quiet, sleepy little place, lying between Walton and Shepperton, and at present boasts of no nearer railway station than that at

the latter place. On arriving at Shepperton, a broad country road, flanked on either side by tall hedges and pretty little cottage nooks, is seen in one's front, and some hundred yards from the station it sweeps round to the left, and the visitor, following the left hand round the road, will find that it leads him direct to the river, and to Stone's famous river-side hostelry. In front is Halliford Point, and some splendid deeps, where the plummet finds twelve, sixteen, and twenty feet of water. Here, in the autumn months, shoals of very heavy bream revel in the cool solitude; plenty of large barbel, and roach and dace are found in likely places to seek for such fish, together with jack, chub and perch. To the left hand the river sweeps round the point with a rapid stream, and widens out to a charming and expansive pool. I should fancy that in the winter time good jack and perch fishing might be had all round the bends of this part of the river, particularly round the stone walls that bound the gardens of the villas to the left of the stream, and paternostering round the old wooden piles and steps of the waterway to the gardens of some of the houses would, I am sure, be productive of many a good haul of ruddy-finned perch. Following the stream as it flows, the angler could not miss marking many glorious spots for the exercise of his craft, while the scenery is simply charming. An ait is passed, where the willows hang over the stream, all down the side of this little island is splendid chub water, and I marked many good fish rising at the insects dropping from the boughs

as I went towards Walton the other day. Immediately opposite the tall chimney shaft seen to the right are the famous "Cowey Deepes," formerly a rare pitch for barbel, but now tenanted more, I think, by bream and roach. More sweetly pretty river scenery it would be hard to find than that up the whole of this reach to Walton Bridge, and if the angler can get the bream "on" at Cowey, there are some fish there that will try his skill and tackle, good as the latter may be. Just opposite Stone's hotel there is a little island with some fine willows, and an ait with a thick growth of withies lies to the right. Between this island and the ait the punts lie moored, and upon my arrival I strolled down to the river side to pump for information. First of all I wanted some tea and a bed for the night. The hotels were full, seemingly, and a man to whom I applied, and who was mopping out a punt, directed me to a Mrs. Searle, a private resident, who lives next door to Stone's. There I found beautifully clean accommodation, with every comfort that an angler could wish for. Then back again to my puntsman, whom I at the time didn't know, but who turned out to be yclept Alfred Trodd; and of a surety the fates were kind, for a better fisherman or more persevering man never handed a ryepeck. "How are the bream feeding?" was my first interrogation on rejoining him. "Well, sir, I can't justly say as they're feeding well yet; we've done nothing to speak on, but two gents as was with me the other day got a few, small fish though mostly, but then they pricked and lost a goodish lot." "Hum!" thought I, and pondered



over this recital—and, “Yes, and where did you get them?” “Why, it’s up at the Chalk Hole they lies now, mostly, I think. The water’s a bit too heavy just here,” he added, indicating the deeps in front of us. “Well, and how far up is the Chalk Hole?” I queried. “Oh, mayhap it’s better’n a mile, perhaps not so much.” “Had he got anything to do?” “No, he hadn’t.” “Well, then, get the punt ready, and I’ll be ready for you in ten minutes.” Then to the Lion for some beer, and soon after I am rocking on the bosom of the dear old Thames, while my puntsman with powerful strokes propels the flat-bottomed boat up stream. Keeping close in to the shore, so as to avoid the full strength of the current, many a goodly chub shoots out from the overhanging willows, and makes for deep water or sheltering weeds; and presently we pass Mr. Lindsay’s handsome residence, with the lawn sloping down to the water’s edge, and smooth and close shaven. Many good “shops,” as the fisherman terms his swim, are passed on the way up, and notably on the margin of the first meadow after passing “the point” above the entrance to the backwater, and many places look “perchy” in the extreme, but in summer it would be useless to attempt fishing from the bank, for the weeds are thick and dense, and mortally tough. Here, however, the punt swings round with the current, and I gather that we have reached “Chalk Hole,” and begin to look about me. So it proves, and presently, after dropping down the stream for a few yards, the ryepeck is plunged in, and the harsh grating noise proves, as it works its way into the river bed, that

we are on a gravel bottom, and then as soon as the punt is fixed I unpack the tackle, while my attendant makes up some clay balls lined with lobs, throws in some handfuls of loose worms as high up the stream as he can, and behind the punt, where the stream will bring them down and suck them under us. "Chalk Hole" has a wonderfully level bed, and Trodd knew every inch of it, I am convinced; he suggested to me that if I plumbed, and allowed a foot from the depth close to the punt, I should get the extreme depth of the swim, no matter how far I travelled; and this I found out afterwards was very nearly right, The plummet bumps on the gravel, and registers twelve feet, while the current here is slow and steady, and just the place for big bream. "Well, here's my first swim," thought I, and the float, after performing some curious gyrations in the eddies close to the punt, now rights itself, and travels steadily down, the hook baited with the tail end of a lob. I used a long Nottingham float, shotted down to an inch from the surface, and carrying a fair quantity of lead, and it dips down every now and then as the extra bit on the bottom catches in a stone or other obstruction, very fine running tackle, drawn gut bottom and hook link, the water being very bright, and half-expected every moment to see my float glide out of sight with that slow, uncertain movement so indicative of a heavy bream. No such luck, however; swim after swim succeeded with no result, and it was scarcely to be wondered at. It was a glorious evening, and delightfully cool after

a hot close day, and boats, those delights of the angler's heart (?), simply swarmed. Look which way one would there were boats, boats everywhere; presently the horrid shrill scream from the whistle of a steam launch sounded jarringly on the serenity of the evening stillness, and directly afterwards the boat, loaded with its careless freight, and spite of my puntsman's warning shout to "ease up," rushed by at full speed, almost washing us adrift, its occupants seemingly delighted at our annoyance. What would Walton have said, could he but have seen the river in his day as it exists in ours? He would hardly have called angling now the "contemplative man's recreation." "It's not an atom of use, Alfred," I ejaculated, I'm afraid in not the best of tempers, "we must give it up. Pull the poles up, and drift in to the side amongst the willows, and then, when some of these gentry have cleared away, we'll bait the hole for the morning." "All right, sir," and two minutes afterwards the punt was pushed into the side, and there we sat smoking, for an hour, until the gloaming deepened on the quiet river reaches, and the evening mist settled over the flowery meadows. I say "we" sat smoking; I should rather have used the personal pronoun, for, wonder of wonders, my puntsman didn't smoke, and was contented to sit quietly chatting until we got a clear stage for baiting the hole. This we did shortly afterwards thoroughly, and then dropped down with the stream for home. Soon Halliford lights gleam bright through the rapidly increasing gloom, then the punt grates on the gravelly shallows,

and next moment is fast at the landing-place. Collecting my traps, I was soon on shore, and presently my man and I wended our way up to the Lion for a drop of "whisky warm," for the evening air was quite chilly. "Lemon, Alfred?" "If you please, sir." "And now," said I, "I want to be off early in the morning; what time will you be ready?" "Your time's mine, sir." "Very well, then, say four sharp; it will be light then; and now, good night! I shall turn in at once." It was pitch dark when I woke in the morning, and I lighted my candle, looked at my watch, and was out of bed like a rocket, when I found it was 3.40, and after a good wash crept down the creaking stairs, candle in one hand and rods in the other, quietly opened the side door, then blew my candle out, and stepped into the garden, where the mignonette smelt deliciously. I could not see the river for the fog, and couldn't see Trodd either until I got down to the punts. There he was, however, sitting like a ghostly fisherman in the white mist, and with everything in apple-pie order. "Good morning, Alfred; what do you think of it?" "Why, I thinks we shall get some very good fish, sir," he replied, as he pushed the punt off, while I fitted up Gregory's little spinner, on the off-chance of getting an early rising perch or two. "Glad to hear it," I said, as I cast the spinner out, and the top joint bent down as soon as the revolving bait caught the stream; then I had a pull at the whisky flask, and lit my pipe, to keep the river fog out while the punt forged ahead. No boats now, thank goodness. All around

was quiet and silent as the grave, while the fog wreaths grew less dense as the light advanced. "Quack, quack, quack," sounded out like a clarion on the still morning air, and I just caught sight of three wild ducks that rose from the sedge, and then a tug at the spinner as we rounded the bend woke me up thoroughly, and soon a handsome perch, a pounder, was over the side and in the well, five minutes afterwards I got another, and then a baby jack, which I carefully put back again, seemingly none the worse for the triangle through his nose. "Well, here's Chalk Hole," thought I, as the well-remembered willow clumps hove in sight, and then the punt rounds, and is soon fixed, while I fit up a leger, baiting the hook with a bright lobworm. I had not been in a moment before the top bent, and then came a "tug" that meant business. The next instant I struck, to find myself fast in a "big-un" of some sort, and he made my little rod bend with a vengeance as he sailed first one way, then another, then bored hard on the bottom, and then steamed away down stream with full pressure on, which I couldn't check too rudely, for the gut was fine, and had had but little time to soak. A good point I noticed at once about my puntman was that he never bothered me with needless advice. Some of them, the moment a decent fish is hooked, tease one to death with recommendations: "Keep your rod up, sir;" "Don't take hold of the line, sir;" "Mind the pole, sir," and so on, until it makes a nervous angler still more anxious, and sickens even a good one. Another vicious dig for the

bottom on the part of my fish, and then he yielded to the strain of the rod, and a great bream rolled his golden sides twelve yards away from the punt. Down he goes again, and I cannot help thinking of the description given of the bream by some writers, "a coward, and soon killed." Try them, that's all, with very fine tackle and in deep water, and one like the fellow I was playing will cause an alteration of opinion, I think. "Now, Alfred, he'll come," said I, as my friend showed himself once more, and with many a roll and pull at my wrist the big fellow nears the punt. "Bravo! he's a beauty," and a beauty he was, cleverly netted, as golden as a guinea, and shining in the morning light. He scaled fully four-and-a-half pounds if an ounce, and rely upon it we "wetted both eyes" over him for good luck. I wanted to get the Nottingham tackle fitted up, so that after my man had thrown in a couple of handfuls of lobs I gave him the leger rod, while I set to work. Almost directly he hooked a fish, and gave me the rod to play him, while he ran the running line of my Nottingham rod through the rings. This fish was nothing like the first, and I made short work of him, then rebaited and put the rod down. I soon had the float tackle in working order, and got the right depth to an inch, and, baiting the hook with the tail end of a worm, began my first swim. The float travelled steadily down, the line being held clear off the water, the rod-point gradually raised, so as to keep the line as taut as possible. The float dips down, then recovers itself. "Was it a bite?" no, something catch-

ing on the bottom. Another dip, a slight rise, and then the long quill slides slowly down out of sight. No mistake this time, and I strike, to be greeted with that delightful twang from the strained silk that at once tells the fisherman he's "home." This fellow fought gamely and well; and, considering that I had drawn gut only to play him with, that he had out twenty yards of line when he was first hooked, I could not take any liberties with him, and had to handle him very tenderly. He made a furious rush, and rattled the silk off the reel, as he did half a dozen times at least before he was netted. Thus the morning sped on, and I took fish as fast as I well could, up till eight o'clock; and many of them rare good ones. Then, to my utter disgust, a party of "gentlemen," who had been "camping out," and whom we had passed while they were snoring under canvas as we came down, quietly and deliberately pushed a punt across our swim, into the willows not six yards from where ours lay, and eight of them, undressing, plunged into the very pool wherein we were taking fish. I knew it was useless to argue with them, and mere waste of time to make any comment upon their behaviour, particularly to men who were so ignorant of common courtesy as these evidently were. I consequently held my tongue, and told my attendant to put me on shore in order to get home to breakfast. Nothing would induce Alfred to leave his swim. "No, sir," said he, "we haven't done with this yet; and we'll get a very fine show o' fish before the day's out. I daresay you'll be good enough to tell my pardner, an' he'll see to my

breakfast." "Very well, I will," and then, as I expected a friend down by the first train, I pushed on up the towing path for home. I was just clearing up the last egg when my hostess ushered in my friend, and, "Halloa, uncle!" I exclaimed, "come along; there's some tea left and an egg or two." Breakfast, however, my friend declined, and was anxious to get on the water; so, obtaining a boat, we rowed up the stream, bound again for Chalk Hole. My friend eagerly listened to my recital of the morning's sport, and when we got up to the punt, and he peeped into the well, his blue eyes danced with excitement as he saw the great golden-scaled fish rolling about, and floundering in the far too shallow water. He soon had a rod fitted up with Nottingham tackle, managed it excellently, and before his float had travelled down the reach many times was fast in a good fish. "Bravo," I exclaimed, as my friend, holding a big bream delicately, yet firmly, turned him from mid-stream, where he seemed bent on going, and then kept him well under the springing rod, until, fairly tired out, he yielded to a gentle pull, and, after an unwieldy splash or two, was netted. A bottle of Bass paid tribute to my friend's first fish, and the foaming beer creamed up over the glasses, as we drank "Success to angling." Then to it again—fishing I mean, and "Uncle" got another and yet another, while I sat idle and couldn't get a fish. At two o'clock a boat was sent with our hot dinner. We landed, and under the shade of the pollards discussed an excellent meal, provided by the good old soul at our domicile. Then, spreading the



mackintoshes on the grass, we lay on our backs and smoked, watching the hundreds of swallows hawking about in the clear, fresh atmosphere, and two jollier mortals lived not that day. After a final pipe, and a toothful of "the cratur" to keep the sun out of our eyes, we adjourned to the punt and the afternoon's fishing. Considering that shoals of boats swarmed on the river we did wonders, at the end of the day had a splendid lot of fish, and thoroughly satisfied with the day, the fishing, and, more particularly, with the excellence of our attendant, we left off at six, and caught the seven o'clock from Shepperton to Waterloo.

## FURTHER JOTTINGS ON THE MOLE.

I RECEIVED a note one morning from a friend living in the neighbourhood of Box Hill desiring to see me upon a matter of some moment. I knew him, not as an angler, so that I did not depend upon his having any tackle for use, and bearing in mind that I had promised my readers some further notes on the Mole, I packed up a couple of rods and the necessary reels, gut bottoms, &c., and determined upon trying my hand for one hour in this picturesque portion of the river, previous to my return to town. Rising near the confines of Sussex, and receiving two or three tributary streams, the Mole, anciently called the Emlay, winds a sinuous meandering course through a great part of the county of Surrey, passing Horley and Betchworth, through the magnificent vale country surrounding Mickleham and the neighbourhood of Dorking, then on through Stoke, Cobham, Claremont, and Esher, through East Moulsey, and into the Thames at Hampton Court. At Box Hill and the more immediate neighbourhood the Mole displays some of its most charming features, and a stranger wandering along its banks could hardly believe that it was one and the same stream, taking two stand-points, say a couple of hundred yards apart. First one strikes it rushing

and brawling like a mountain trout stream, with hardly a foot of water over its gravelly bed. The next moment all the noise is gone, one misses the merry tinkle of the swift stream among the boulders, and a deep, solemn-looking pool succeeds, almost always shut in by high banks, and great overhanging trees hoary with age, where the light is softened and subdued by the thick tangled foliage. In such spots one involuntarily feels steal over one's thoughts, that solemnity of mind so exquisitely expressed in Hood's beautiful poem of the Elm Tree, and the gifted writer's poetry rises anew upon one's memory. What can more closely depict such a scene than the following :—

I wandered down the dappled path  
 Of mingled light and shade ;  
 How sweetly gleamed that arch of blue  
 Beyond the green arcade !  
 How cheerly shone the glimpse of heaven,  
 Beyond that verdant aisle !  
 All overarched with lofty elms,  
 That quenched the light the while,  
     As dim and chill  
     As serves to fill  
 Some old cathedral pile.

I am afraid there can be little doubt that the river is terribly poached in many places, for I can recollect spots ten or a dozen years ago from which one could get a good basket of fish that at present seems not to have a fin in them. Either the fish are gone, swept out of their homes by the net, or they are so shy and wary from constant fishing that they refuse a bait in any shape. There used to be some deep holes not far from Horley Church, out of which I have taken some splendid chub and

bream, and occasionally a good jack, and below the mill other good and deep water could be found, in which any amount of large coarse fish revelled. I never found any difficulty about fishing here, a polite word of apology to any of the landowners who did complain of trespass being usually followed by an invitation to continue my sport, and I have been recently told by a friend who has been passing his vacation in this picturesque neighbourhood, that he experienced no trouble in getting permission to fish ; but that he could not catch anything, and he laid the fault at the door of the poaching loafers that hang about the village tap-houses, and who would infinitely rather "tickle" a brace of trout, or "grip" a spawning jack with their infernal pole and bit of brass wire, to supply themselves with beer and "bacca," than do an hour's thatching. On the other hand, I am perfectly certain that fish are not to be taken nowadays in the easy way that they were years ago ; if there is any open water, and the place is within easy access of a big town, where twenty years ago twenty craftsmen with the angle used to resort, they can now be counted by hundreds. The consequence is that fish get wary and cautious in the extreme, utterly repudiate the old-fashioned dodges, and only fall victims to some new method of fishing, or some fresh way of presenting them a bait, and I know of no river to which these remarks apply more certainly than the one under notice. I have previously said in my comments upon that part of the Mole between Hampton and Esher that certain disappointment

awaits the angler who fishes any open part of this stream in the old-fashioned style, with the long bamboo rod, and a big quill float, and I am assured that these ideas will be found to be strictly true, save there may be exceptional circumstances with regard to wind and weather, and the angler is fortunate enough to choose a day when, through some undefined cause, the fish are "mad on." Then, of course, the veriest tyro may get them, but not without. On my arrival at my friend's sanctum, the immediate cause of my visit having been discussed, he and I went for a stroll towards the river, which runs partly round the base of Box Hill, with its exquisite scenery, and through private grounds. It then flows under the railway bridge, close to which is a very deep hole, with some "whoppers" as lodgers there, and runs through Norbury Park. There are bream in plenty here, and of large size—chub, perch, roach, dace, and carp, and may be an occasional trout or two, but the latter are not frequently met with. Presently, following the river through some meadows, I came across a hole, deep, I could see at a glance, that looked like business, and directly afterwards we met the farmer in whose meadows we were. He at once gave me permission to fish from his land, although he said he usually refused on account of his crops. I am, therefore, compelled to withhold the exact locality. I was on the bank by daybreak, and very quiet and still was everything around. A rabbit jumped up, and flew at high speed down the lane as I turned the corner, and took refuge in a thick clump of fern ; anon,

as I crossed the meadow, a flock of lapwings rose hurriedly, and went off, piping their melancholy cry, until lost in the white mist that hung over the grass-land. I could not hope for much in the way of sport, for the hole had not been baited ; and, besides, I knew nothing as to whether it was a fish haunt or not. There was just that spice of uncertainty that makes a successful issue more enjoyable. The hole was very deep, and some bushes grew out over the water. These materially helped me, for they enabled me to see and yet not be seen by the denizens of the pool, no little advantage at all times. I had brought down some lobworms, the best of all baits for this river, and had got some more from my friend's garden the previous evening, so that I cut up a fair quantity, and threw them up stream a few yards from where I intended my bait to lie. In these deep portions of the Mole the current is very gentle, and I knew from experience that the less weight there was upon the line the better, so that I fitted up a fine gut leger bottom, with no bullet or weight of any kind upon it, save one No. 4 shot, and the lobworm itself. The hook used was a small one, not much bigger than an ordinary roach hook, but made of stouter wire, and the worm, instead of being threaded on the hook, or looped up, was put on in the following manner :—Take the worm and merely “nick” the hook through the head, or half an inch below it, and then draw the gut through, and put the point of the hook in half way down the body—watch the action of two worms in a basin of

water, the one being put upon the hook in the ordinary style, the other in the way just described, and the latter method, from the fact that the bait receives so little injury, and is hence by far the livelier and more enticing morsel, will be at once preferred, as being the most likely to kill cautious fish. When there is so little weight upon the line, it is not wise to attempt to throw from the top of the rod. The worm is certain to be torn ; so I draw a sufficient quantity of my fine running tackle off the reel, and coil it in distinctly separate rings on the bank. Then taking the baited hook between the thumb and finger, I throw it out up stream, and, if care has been exercised in coiling the line, it will fly out after the worm, and the gentle current sucks it down naturally to where one wishes it to rest. I am certain that where a place is much fished the residents are up to every dodge, and nothing is more likely to scare a shy biting fish than to feel either the weight of the bullet, if he takes the worm from the bottom, rises with it to the surface, as bream particularly are in the habit of doing, or feels the pull of the top joint, if he takes the bait, and quietly sails away with it. By the process I have described there is literally not the slightest impediment to the feeding fish, save the natural weight of the worm itself, although of course this method can only be carried out in pools like the one I was fishing, where the stream is extremely gentle, or in ponds or lakes where there is none at all. Well, I put the rod down upon the bank, with the handle of my wooden winch clear of even a blade of grass, and, sitting

right away from the water, awaited events. The light line was sucked first one way, then another, by the current, but no sign of a bite, indicated by the trembling of the line at first, then by its tightening gradually, presented itself. I might have been in the desert itself so quiet was all around, save for the partridge calling and the lark's song overhead. The first rays of the sun began to glint through the trees, and streak the meadows beyond with a mellow light. I was watching the line, had just lighted a pipe, and turned to look at the vesuvian sputtering in the wet grass, when my eyes fell on the winch handle, and, behold, it was slowly going round! I gulped a mouthful of smoke, half-choked myself, and then picked up my rod, and checked the winch. The next instant the line tightened right under the bushes. I struck sideways, and a tremendous lunge from something heavy greeted me. Pull—I should think he did pull! and then stopped, after a run of five or six yards, and fought like a demon, first one way, then another, until he bent my little rod like a whip. I had a glorious ten minutes' battle with him, and thought twenty times he was gone, but patience and good gut settled him finally, and I had the pleasure of grassing as handsome a bream, and a big one to boot, as I ever had in my life. What a satisfaction it is to think that one has fairly "circumwented," as an old Lea fisherman of my acquaintance would have it, some artful old stager, who, but for an extra bit of cunning on the part of the fisher, would, in all probability, have "grouted" on



the mud bottom of the deeps, or rolled his big sides on the yellow gravel of the shallows for many a year to come. Ten minutes afterwards I had another run, and pricked a monster, but lost him, all through being a little too much in a hurry. One thing should be remembered when baiting with worm in the manner detailed, the fish should always be allowed time to take it thoroughly. I got one more fish, and a very good one, although nothing like the first that I had netted; and then I found upon looking at my watch that inexorable time compelled me, much against my inclination, to pack up. What I might have done had I been enabled to stay the day out I know not, but the chances are that I should have had a heavy bag at the end of the day. Fish were there beyond all question, and "grouzers" too, of which I had ample evidence. No help for it, however, I was compelled to catch an early train for town, so after packing up and shouldering my traps I turned away from the deep hole, in which I knew many a good one was located, and with lingering, regretful steps, retraced my way to my friend's home. He, lazy dog, was not down when I returned, but I shall not readily forget his look of astonishment when I took him to look at the fish as they lay in the kitchen sink, and his surprised exclamation of "What, do you mean to tell me those came from our little river?" conveyed to me plainly that he didn't see them of that calibre every day.

## THE THAMES AT STAINES. BARBEL FISHING AT THE HALF- WAY HOUSE.

THERE was little or no barbel fishing in the Thames last season (1877), and heavy rains had swollen the river, when my friend and I landed at the Pack Horse at Staines, thus the accounts of sport when we got there was not very encouraging. Staines, twenty-two miles from London, is easily reached by rail from Waterloo, and anglers can now, travelling by the privilege tickets generously accorded to fishermen by the South-Western Company, get there and back for a couple of shillings. The fishing is good at times, and there is, without doubt, some exquisite river scenery at this somewhat out-of-the-way bit of the Thames. Indeed, I much question whether the far-famed glories of Cookham, or the towering slopes of Quarry Woods and Cliefden, with their magnificent masses of gorgeously tinted foliage, can eclipse the reaches of river between the railway bridge and Penton Hook. All the way down the towing path fine elms and beeches hang over the footway, giving a grateful shade to the pedestrian, while the stream is fringed with "water gardens." There are beds of slender elegant reeds, bending their fragile stems to the swift stream, nodding their feathery

heads and kissing the wave to every gust of wind, and then, as the ripple dies away from the surface, rising erect again. Anon we get to a group of the immense water dock, that foe to light tackle, with its great pale green leaves. Then, in some little bay a bed of pink persicaria, with thousands of bright spikes of bloom amongst the green and brown shaded leaves, courts attention ; while, towering above the pale blue flowers and bright yellow eye of the forget-me-not, nestling amongst its waxen-looking leaves, are splendid banks of bloom of the purple loosestrife, lending a warmth of colouring to the scene. From the towing path I am assured that in the later portions of the year, when the wintry frosts have sapped away the present luxuriant growth of weed, good fishing may be had, and I passed several spots where shoals of good roach were sailing in and out, in perfect security, that would, under different circumstances, echo to the "tang" of the bank fisher's tight line as the float shot down out of sight, and be productive of a well-filled basket, should a practical man wield the rod. Fishing there in the summer, however, would be utterly useless—first weeds abound, and then there are "just a few" boats passing and repassing. One day I wired to Wells of Nottingham for two thousand worms, and they were at my disposal by the first train on the following morning, and having disposed of business, I started to meet "Uncle" at Waterloo. There he was, laden with traps, and, after mutual salutations, tickets were obtained, and we were soon comfortably seated in one of the South-

Western Company's smoking carriages. It was fortunately a fast train, and we rattled along past Putney and the outskirts of Wimbledon, awaking reminiscences of the Running Deer, and the stalwart Queen's prizeman of a past year, over the bright shining river, flashing in the autumn sun, at Richmond, and at last to the station at Staines. Turning to the right hand, and leaving a clump of magnificent walnuts, heavy with fruit, to the left, we pursue the path until the second horse road on the right is reached ; this we take, and five minutes' walk brings us to the Pack Horse. We, with great loads of tackle and *impedimenta* of various kinds at our backs, might almost be likened to pack horses, and I, for one, never want to find better "stabling" than I found at this charming little river-side "pub." Everything was good and capitally cooked ; the "bitter" perfection. Our expedition this time seemed fated to be a blank, and hopes were damped to start with, to find that our puntsman, Keene, the fisherman *par excellence* of Staines, was engaged for a week's fishing at Datchet. However, we managed to get a punt, and poled across the river to hunt him up, and finding his wife, the good dame promised that her husband should come to us in the evening, but that she could hold out no hope that he could be with us on the morrow. "Seems to me it's a frost, old fellow," was Uncle's dubious remark as we retraced our steps for the Pack Horse and tea. *Nil desperandum* I replied, and by the time we got back the chops were ready. About eight o'clock our friend Keene was announced, and completed

our discomfiture by telling us that he was engaged, and was "a'goin up the Fleet barbellin'." "Had he got any barbel?" "Yes, he'd taken twenty-two fish that day, and hoped to get a hundred-weight to-morrow. Very sorry I can't go with you, gentleman," he continued; "but anyhow my brother can, and he's known the river man and boy now for a good many years." "What do you think of the Half-Way House?" I queried. "Can't do better; there's tons o' barbel there, and with them worms you must get 'em." "Well, then, you make arrangements with your brother to be ready at five o'clock in the morning with the punt. We shall not want tackle of any kind, or bait, so now good night." Presently, while chatting over our grog and tobacco in the open air, we sit listening to some yet distant boat's crew dropping down with the stream, who are singing, with excellent voices among them, the Barcarolle from Masaniello, the melody, softened by the distance, sounding with exquisite effect over the shadowy water, darkness rapidly closes in upon us, and I am almost inclined to get my great-coat, so chilly does the autumn night become. However, before turning in we were amused by a dozen or so of glittering specks of light floating down the waveless stream. Many are the conjectures that arise. "Boats!" I suggested; but, "No, they can't be boats!" exclaims Uncle, and as they came nearer a volley of stones from some bystanders revealed the fact that they were a lot of night lights set floating in the calm evening. After a very restless night I was glad to find that my watch pointed out

"time to be up," and, after a good sluice in cold water, we crept downstairs, and out into, perhaps, as lovely a morning as ever gladdened an angler's heart. The sparrows were twittering on the eaves, and shaking their plumage, while the trees were dropping a rain of dew on the stones of the pathway. The river looked like a vast mirror, with trees, boats, swans fast asleep as yet, and the piles of the bridge reflected on the glassy surface. We are looking anxiously up stream for the advent of our punt, and presently a far-off boat is seen in the grey light pushing off into the stream, and then, catching the sweep of the current, is rapidly alongside, and away we go for the Half-way House. We are not long in the boat before Truss's Island is passed on our right, its banks shaded with some magnificent old willows. Here the river is very deep, and grand roach swims are at hand at every step along the shores of this island. Next a wide open pool presents itself, and an old turreted building of red brick on the right hand, with an immense gilded representative of some one of the finny tribe on the weather vane. This is the Half-way House, famous as the scene of some of Mr. J. W. Gant's great takes of barbel, and is hailed as our first pitch. It is just as much as our good fisherman can well do to fix the punt, for the stream, already greatly swollen with the heavy rain, and yet withal wonderfully bright, sweeps round the point here with a very heavy body of water. An ordinary leger bullet was simply useless; no bottom could be

felt, and first two, and eventually three bullets had to be used before anything like a stationary effect, could be obtained. Our man baited the hole thoroughly, we used the finest tackle, with leger bottoms of fine stained gut, and baiting with the tail end of one of the brightest lobs. All, however, to no purpose. Not a single "knock" was felt, and as the hours swiftly fled hopes were lowered in a corresponding ratio. "I tell you what it is," said Uncle, "I'm getting infernally hungry, let us get home to breakfast." "Well and good," I rejoined, "we'll be off." So the punt was set moving, and very shortly afterwards we were eating our morning meal, while our puntsman, scorning tea, attacked a large platter of cold meat and a pint of ale under the willows in the garden. After our repast pipes were lighted, and lunch and the stone bottle of ale was got aboard. We then started to fish a famous barbel hole just above Staines Bridge. The reach between the railway bridge and the one just named is famous for its heavy jack, and I fitted up a spinner on the off chance, without, however, any result. To the right hand, and midway between the two bridges, a branch of the Colne empties itself into the main, and here, at the mouth of this little stream, a heavy trout or two are generally lying. Still, nearly opposite, but nearer the towing path, I remember there used to be a rattling barbel swim, and to this day the recollections of old Fletcher's great take of this fish are as green as ever. Then, some hundred

yards before we reach the bridge, a deep is passed, wherein are two or three sunken punts, and this is a noted roach swim, frequently affording great hauls of silvery beauties. We tried it later in the day, but with little or no effect, for roach, alike with others of their scaly companions, seemed "dead off," and not to be had at any price. Now we reach the bridge, a very beautiful structure, and built entirely of *white* granite, a most unusual building material, and passing under and up stream for some forty or fifty yards, the punt swings round, the rye-pecks are jammed fast in the gravel bottom, and we prepare to fish a deep hole to the left of the river and under the first archway, the home of very large barbel and bream. One could not help noticing, as the sun shone merrily out, the play of the reflection from the water upon the inside of the white arches. The hole referred to had been well baited the evening before, and knowing the reputation it enjoyed of holding "whoppers," it was not without a feeling of misgiving that I surveyed the excessively fine gut I was using preparatory to throwing out. However, here goes, and splash! down goes the bait into deep water, close to the starlings of the bridge, then drawing the line home again for perhaps three yards, thus insuring the gut being clear, I put the rod down while I started my pipe. I noticed a little tremulous motion of the top joint, and took the rod up, then a tiny pull — I didn't wait for more — struck, and hooked



my first fish, a pretty little chub, not more than a pound weight at the outside, however; and then both Uncle and I were annoyed by a shoal of dace, that were evidently hard at work at the lobs, and we hooked them fast enough for a time. No barbel, however, try as we would. We had a bit of greaves, in anticipation of a nip of frost at night, and tried them. The minute the baited hook found the bottom, tug, tug, came vibrating through the silk, and first roach and then dace were landed. "Hang it all, this will never do," thought I; and, reeling up, I picked out the most silvery tit-bit in the shape of a lob that I could find, and down that went. The minute it was in I felt a "niggle," at the next struck quick as lightning; "Hallo, got you, my boy!" "Hurrah!" says Uncle, "let him have it." The bent top told tales this time, and nothing but a barbel could give such furious tugs as this. "Ah, he's but a little one, I'm afraid," I commented, as the strain suddenly ceased, and a little one he was, perhaps something over a two-pounder. So I put on the steam, and he was very soon netted. Then Uncle got one something better, and things looked brighter; but it was only a sudden spurt, and soon died out, and feed they would not anything like well. Presently I rigged up Nottingham tackle, and tried that, with a long swim down. Dace I could catch in plenty, but no barbel, and, tired of trying hard with no result, we put the rods down and opened the luncheon hamper. That being discussed we tried them again, with much about the same

result, and got a few fish, but none worth talking about. Still we stuck to it, and until the shades of evening came creeping over. We agreed then it was useless, and reeled up, although we had anything but heavy baskets. One thing, however, in our favour was that we had a good puntsman, a man who really works hard for his customers. We missed *the* fisherman of Staines, it is true ; but his brother is an unassuming, quiet man, knows the river well, will, I am sure, try all he knows to insure sport, and that is more than I can say of every fisherman I have been out with. Since my last Thames fishing gossip, in which I expatiated warmly upon the thoughtless conduct of some of the steam launch crews upon the river, I see that a sad accident has occurred, by which, if the account as given in the public press be correct, it is possible that one life may be lost, through a launch running into a fishing party, quietly moored in their punt. Surely it is time the Conservators took some stringent steps, whereby the river shall not be so completely monopolised by the amateur boating element throughout the summer season, to the exclusion of every one else. The real oarsman, I am convinced, keeps his own course, and avoids interference with others and their pleasures. Unfortunately the river teems with crews who practically know as much of the management of a boat as they would of the "tooling" of a tandem through Cheapside, or the "nursing" of a good horse over a heavy country, with a burning scent in front. Only the other day, when fishing

the Thames, my little son, who was with me, perched on the end of the punt out of the way, and who was amusing himself with catching bleak, was as nearly as possible knocked overboard into twelve feet of water by a boat's crew who ran right into our punt. He must inevitably have gone, save for the punt pole being first struck by the oars ; had it not been there the boy must have received the blow and been swept off. I sincerely hope that the matter may be seriously taken up, and that some means may be devised whereby the present reckless rowing by boats' crews and dangerous steering of steam launches on the Thames may, in the general interest of society, be thoroughly checked. The present rules seem to be useless. The nuisance is as glaringly great now as it ever was, and the co-operation of every angler who finds pleasure in the pursuit of his sport in the glorious reaches of one of the most charming rivers in the world should be given in some way, so that by combined action such scandals as were enacted but lately at Old Windsor may once for all be put a stop to.

## THE THAMES AT SHEPPERTON. A VARIED DAY.

AT Shepperton, nineteen miles from London traffic, the bank angler finds plenty of scope for his long rod, and innumerable swims can be found, particularly along the meadow side of the stream, for roach fishing, and every now and then one comes to a spot that a practical eye marks as the abode of chub and perch. Dimsey Mead, above the lock gates, is an excellent place to make for, and I am assured that the landowners never interrupt anglers who conduct themselves properly. Capital chub lie all along the sides of this meadow, and deep holes exist where, I doubt not, some of the heavy bream for which this locality is noted might be induced to nibble at an attractive lob, attached neatly to a fine leger bottom. Since these pages were written several fine takes of bream have been had from these very holes. Whilst wending one's way over the meadow it is a good plan to keep a sharp look-out for baby frogs, and "bag" as many as are seen. They are worth the trouble of stopping to pick up, for with Thames chub in particular they are about the "killingest" bait I know of. Again, along the towing path towards Chertsey I noticed some capital roach water here and there, and the weeds do not seem so thick and dense as at other places on the river.

With a long rod and somewhat longer strike line than is ordinarily used, so as to completely clear the fringe of weeds, I am certain that with fine, quiet fishing some fair bags might be had. A London rodster showed me the other evening upon my upward journey, a really handsome bag of roach in splendid condition, that were taken from a spot half a mile above the lock, and on the towing path side. A friend of mine went to Halliford intending to fish the "Chalk Hole" there, for bream, and promised, in the event of his doing anything worth noting, to wire me to that effect. Consequently upon my return home from town one evening, and upon being presented with the well-known red envelope, I expected to find the telegram recorded some "doughty deeds." Thus it ran—"Sport indifferent. Bream not on. Have baited the deeps at Shepperton. Join me in the morning. Will meet you at the station."—"All right," thought I, "it is some time since I tried the deeps there ; I'll go." The morning was a glorious one—cool and grey, with not a breath of wind, and as I turned out and scanned the sky I mentally augured just such an one as it turned out to be. The first weather vane, though, pointed uncompromisingly due north, and northerly breezes and successful fishing don't agree. Few anglers would say, "Hail to thee, great nor'-easter." However, I meant going, and, as I trudged along to Waterloo, passed not a few anglers, all bound for the same terminus. At Shepperton my friend was waiting, and, as we pushed on down the lane, detailed his two days' experiences ; whilst Alfred Trodd, whom my friend had fortunately found at liberty,

had again won golden opinions for his civility and professional skill. Twenty minutes' smart walking brought us to Shepperton Lock, crossing which, we turned to the right, and passing the weir, a glorious fall of water, which many years ago had an extraordinary reputation for its immense trout, and now holds in its foamy stream rare bream and barbel, we followed the meadow down for some two hundred yards until the top of the punt poles and a peep of Trodd's hat proclaimed his whereabouts under the high banks. "Good morning, Alfred." "Good morning to you, sir; glad to see you down again." My traps were soon aboard, and we then had to step down somewhat gingerly on account of the height of the bank. The well, of course, was inspected the first thing, and some slapping great bream were its occupants, while two or three more, the victims of an operation with the disgorger through swallowing the hook too greedily, were covered up with a wet cloth. "Well, I don't know, old man," said I, addressing my friend, "you seem to have been doing pretty well, spite of the sport being 'indifferent.' Where did these come from." "Where we are now, sir"—this, from our puntman, who hastily put in his oar before my friend could reply. "Ay, sir," he continued, "and there's some here twice as big." Our punt was soon fixed, and then I had time to look about me. "Ham Hard Deeps," at which we were, are, as I said, two hundred or two hundred and fifty yards below the weir, and certainly look the picture of a snugger for heavy fish. On the left-hand side, facing the weir, there is a high clay bank, with willows and an occasional oak hanging

over the stream, a very heavy sweep of water from the weir-fall runs with great force round this bank, and in the rapids the biggest of the big barbel are found. Trodd told me, however, that he had baited them on several occasions with no result, and seemingly Shepperton was no more favoured for barbel hauls during the '77 season than any other spot. Meeting an acute angle of the river bank, the stream sweeping down, forms in the deeps an extremely "fishy" looking back eddy, flowing over some gravelly shallows, an excellent spot for the exercise of the graceful wand in the capture of dace, and then, gradually deepening, full sixteen feet of water is found in the middle of the pool. For ten or a dozen yards the same depth is maintained, with a nice gentle current, and afterwards the water shallows again—together a splendid bit of the river. My friend, of course, was already prepared with the tackle of the previous day, and was soon at work, and while I was fitting up my own a tremendous splash in the pool behind me, almost as though a big Newfoundland had sprung from the bank, made me jump half out of my chair. I whipped round just in time to catch the commotion of the water before it subsided into long eddying ripples; and I suppose, in answer to a look of inquiry, Trodd grinned, and said, "Ah! he's a big-un, ain't he, sir? that's a trout, that is, and a good ten-pounder." Splosh!! Splosh!! up he came again as we sat talking, and threw himself half out of the water. By Jove! there was no mistake about it; a trout sure enough, and what a beauty! He was so close that I could

distinctly see his gloriously spotted sides, and the way he made the dace fly over the shallows was a caution. "By-the-by, Alfred, where did Mr. Evans hook that big jack?" "In this very pool, sir; and a big-un he was, I can tell you. Did you see the fish he bit?" "No; but I heard all about it from reliable authority, and meant to ask you." For the reader's information, I add the facts to which the foregoing chat bore reference. A gentleman whom I know intimately had been down a day or so following my take of bream in the Chalk Hole, but weather was utterly against bream fishing, and it was useless persevering. It blew a gale, the puntman suggested jack fishing, and, it seems, punted up to this very hole, where we were. Mr. Evans, the gentleman alluded to, had some good fun with the sharks--lots of runs, at any rate, and five or six good fish at the end of the day. One run produced a little one of about a pound and a half, and while he was getting him into the punt, what must have been a veritable monster seized the "baby," and away he went with it, taking out no end of line in his travels round the pool. Whether he was checked at all, or the line caught some obstruction preventing his mightiness running as freely as he would have wished, must remain unsaid. Certain it is that the big fellow dropped the little one, and when the latter was brought into the punt, of course stone dead, his back and shoulders were scored deep as though cut with a knife (?) What kind of a jack must he have been? "Oh! in this pool, eh!" thought I, and forthwith rigged up



some tackle that I could depend on, with a thumping dace for bait, and left it to take care of itself, while I was attending to the bream. My friend had by this time got among them, and had hooked and was playing a handsome fish. "Steady, old fellow, don't hold him too tightly," I ventured to exclaim, as I noticed the top joint bent a trifle too much. He did not want much tuition, however, played his fish very well, and presently bream No. 1 was netted, and splashed the water in the well to the accompaniment of the pop of the cork drawn in his honour. I got a rare tug at my leger a few minutes afterwards, and hooked a handsome little perch, glowing with bright colour, and, of course, made short work of him. What a brilliant fellow does the Thames perch become, with his striped jacket and scarlet fins, as soon as the autumn begins to set in. Another little "sniggle" runs through the fine silk, proclaiming that something or other is making love to my lob; then the top bends, and, "chung," I am fast in a good bream. "This is a good fish, old man, I know," I remarked to my friend, as he pulled heavily on the top joint, compelling me to let him run. Suddenly the winch on the jack rod behind me screamed out, and quick as lightning I gave my bream to Trodd to finish, and "went for" what I ardently hoped might prove the big one. Whirr! whirr-oosh-whirr! away he flew, first to one side of the pool, then back again, almost under the punt, and from there on to the shallows as fast as I could pay the line out. Thirty, forty yards were bowled off the winch, and then he


stopped—oh, how I prayed to gorge the bait—and I put the rod down and relighted my pipe. How slowly the minutes seem to pass. At last, “Now my friend,” I said to myself, and reeled up the line lifts from the water as the rod point is raised, and points straight for the shallows. Then I struck, to find nothing there save the big dace, and that—well, simply squashed. The old adage about the spilt milk recurred forcibly, so I quietly put another dace on, and returned to the bream. The fish I had hooked was by this time safe in the well, and proved to be close upon a four-pounder and as gold as a guinea. “Two o’clock !” “Surely not,” exclaimed my companion ; “but I might have known it, I’m so hungry. Come W., give us some dinner.” So we unpacked the eatables, and discussed the good fare with anglers’ appetites to very great advantage—at least, I speak personally—and then lit up fresh pipes, and resumed fishing, while our puntman put away the relics of the feast. My friend got another good bream ; but, spite of the glorious weather, they did not feed as they should have done, and had seemingly now quite gone off. Another hour passed with little or no result, and then I suggested a move. The punt was loosed, and poles got in, and then we soon get round the point, and are in the direct course of the swift stream. About a hundred yards lower down is “Holliday’s Hole,” another noted fixture, with water twenty feet deep, here Trodd had the misfortune to lose his ryepeck, which somehow slipped out of his hand ; and, heavily shod with iron, sank at

once, and it was, I'm afraid, a case of "tho' lost to sight to memory dear." Below this is an island covered with withies, with deep water close to the bank, and overhung with bushes down to the stream's edge. "Hold hard, Alfred," I exclaimed, "this looks awfully chubby. You've got a bit of greaves there, haven't you?" "Yes, sir; and you'll very likely get a chub here; there's plenty on 'em." I fitted up the Nottingham tackle with a triangle hook, picked out the whitest bit of greaves I could find, and then "floated" down, keeping as close to the side as possible. The first swim away went the float, and I got one about a pound, then I lost a real good one, that doubtless broke me among the sunken boughs; after that good-by, they wouldn't have it any more. Hook and kill chub, and you can take out every one that may be in a hole; prick one, and lose him, and the chances are that you don't get the opportunity of repeating the performance. Moving again, we punt down stream, passing many promising-looking places, and on to the lock. There we have to wait while the hatches are pulled up, and the water lowers to a proper level. Then we push through, and turn up stream and towards Chertsey, pulling up at one of the identical places that I had marked previously in my mind's eye, with the end of the punt not more than its own length from the towing path. Here we got about six feet of water, with a swift stream, and were obliged to use somewhat heavy tackle. A few clay balls soon brought the roach on, the fun became fast and furious, and for an hour and a

half we had excellent sport with the ruddy-finned beauties, several of them being close upon three-quarters of a pound, the majority half-pounders, so that there was little doubt that there were plenty of fish there if one could catch them. They were feeding, if anything, better towards the close, but upon looking at my watch I found it was close upon six o'clock, and as both friend and self were desirous of catching the 7.5 from Shepperton, we had not much time to spare. Away then we go, past "Jelly Cut Island," another famous chub haunt, past the Chalk Hole, Anchor Point, and Mr. Lindsay's beautiful residence, and so on to Halliford, which we reached in time for a cup of tea, and the short walk to the station, after spending as thoroughly enjoyable a September day as I can call to mind.

## THE THAMES AT PENTON HOOK.

AS I have already said, no point on the Thames is of more exquisite variation as regards scenery than a walk from Staines to Penton Hook. The features of the river the whole way are like an open book, he who runs may read, and reading with the practised eye of an angler, scores of places are to be noted as likely to yield profitable employment for the bankman's long rod. Here is a place where the bank shelves straight down, and deep water and a level bottom may be had, even under a twelve-foot rod. Just the spot for mighty thick-backed chub, and shoals of great roach. Twenty or thirty yards further on a gravelly scour is noticed, with the swift stream noisily babbling to the swaying reeds, and what a paradise for the fly-fisher is there! Again, at the next bend the character of the stream changes, and who can doubt but that the deep, subtle water before us is tenanted by the fierce pike—"fell tyrant of the wat'ry plain"—and his congener, the dashing, bold perch, sailing along in all the pride of his striped jacket and bristling, menacing dorsal fin. Tall, majestic trees, rising from a mass of the richest undergrowth, hang over the stream, casting deep, sombre shadows in the clear water, relieved here by the bright light glinting between the tangled foliage. How gorgeous in October is this



almost forest-like luxuriance of leaf becoming! Every tree seems clad with scores of different colours. At the "hook" itself, the upper part of which can be reached by crossing the lock, the lower by the ferry nearly opposite the road leading down from the Horse Shoes at Laleham, and at which "pub," by-the-by, can be found Frank Harris, an intelligent and obliging fellow, and an excellent fisherman to boot—the very essence of solitude can be obtained, and some of the most enticing looking swims that it is possible to find are here at every step. Crossing at the ferry, and following the footpath to the left of the ferryman's cottage, and through the meadows, the Abbey River is presently reached, and rare angling can be obtained here in the proper season. It is quite likely, however, that if grass or crops are standing the farmers might offer a not unreasonable objection to persons crossing the land, but beyond this I do not know of any other obstacle to the angler fishing this pretty tributary to the parent river. Just beyond the farmhouse the water looks the very *beau ideal* of an angler's desires; and, a place some fifty yards below the buildings, and where there are some thick beds of weed round which the stream sweeps with a slow, steady current, should not be passed without a trial, for heavy fish—chub most likely—lie here beyond all doubt, it would be wise to use running tackle, even though one may be but roach fishing, for the other day I was smashed up twice, and lost two good lines whilst fishing for roach, and I came to the conclusion that chub alone would be likely to

go with the rattle these did the moment the hook pricked them. Unfortunately I had no running line with me, or perhaps the second main might have been thrown in my favour. If the water is clear keep a sharp look out under the roots of the overhanging elders and willows, and it is just likely that a shoal of good perch may be noted grubbing about the roots of the trees, then, with worm or minnow, a careful quiet fisher might make rare havoc amongst some of them with a paternoster artfully manipulated under the boughs. There is excellent fishing, in fact, the whole way down this little stream, and every step one takes reveals some fresh charm that Dame Nature has bountifully and lavishly spread out for the benefit of him who loves the fisher's craft, the peace and calm of solitude. Lower down, at the point where the Abbey stream joins the Thames, my pen, as a descriptive medium, seems almost to refuse its office, the mind to become confused with the variety of life and verdure one sees around. It is a very Elysium, both for angler and artist here, shut in by high banks, overhung with gloriously foliaged trees. At our feet is a tiny waterfall, babbling with pleasant murmur, yet with sufficient stream to make a foamy ripple among the boulders; and how "trouty" it looks! See! yonder there, under that big alder, rises a good fish, trout or chub, beyond a doubt. Indeed, a volume might be written on this one nook alone, and one involuntarily feels a pang of regret as one turns and leaves it behind, feeling pretty well assured that nothing like it will

be seen again in one day's outing. Turning to the right, the whole of the upper part of the horse-shoe-shaped island forming the hook can be easily negotiated, and no lack of places found on either side for all classes of angling. A fly or beetle can be used with telling effect from the high banks, and, provided that Piscator keeps well out of sight, a visit from trout or chub is nearly sure to reward a skilful cast; perch, too, are in galore in the deep holes that may be found here and there by judiciously dropping the plummet. Presently, at the bottom of the island, the water sweeps round with rapid stream to the right hand, until the weir, or Tumbling Bay, is reached, up to the head of the fall it is shallow, and in the summer time easily forded, but dangerous to attempt, I should imagine, at any time when heavy rains may have flooded the stream. Supposing, however, that we have got safely across, we now stand on the upper portion of "the hook," which I have before said may be reached from the towing path by crossing the lock, to the right hand lies the weir, and a splendid fall of water it is. Here lie the barbel and trout, and Harris frequently finds his customers rare sport in this charming pool. From the side, however, it is useless to attempt legering, for the bottom close up to the fall is full of huge blocks of stone and other obstructions, doubtless placed there for the double purpose of affording a harbour for the fish, and to break the heavy fall of the water—therefore, brother angler, tempting as it may look, don't attempt



legering here, for it would assuredly result in disappointment, and certain loss of tackle. On the same side, however, but lower down towards the tail of the stream, a better chance with the leger from the bank would be obtained, and still lower, and round the piles of the lock, in the autumn and winter months, the perch resort, and the paternoster would therefore find employment. Then to the left hand of the weir-head roach water in perfection is found, slow, steady swims, with an excellent level bottom, and where the lightest of light tackle can be used, if desirable. Here, however, arises a query. Is it desirable, in a river like the Thames, to use such very light tackle? Hardly, in my opinion, for one never knows what may be the result of a single swim. In the Lea one sits down to fish a known roach swim; and, with care, good hair will stand the brunt of the day, it is, at any rate, an unfrequent occurrence to get hold of a monster that is utterly unmanageable, although instances do occur. In the Thames, however, heavy fish of some sort frequently come out from the deeps, attracted by the ground bait, and on to a roach swim—barbel I know do—then comes a swim when the float shoots under. Piscator strikes, and is greeted by the “chung” of the tight line, the next instant a heavy lunge and a pull, which the Lea hair can’t stand—up flies the top, and our angler is left ruefully contemplating the remnants of his line. “Hang it all, and one of Dodd’s best, too,” says he to himself. Just such an occurrence came under my notice

not long ago in a walk round the hook, where I found, under the second large tree from the upper corner, a well-known Lea angler roach fishing, and with a fine sample of spoil in his basket. He was, as I came up, refitting, after, as he told me, his "third clean break away—all good lines, too, and no mistake—anyhow," added he, "I'd rather come here, because I'm more out of the way of them blessed boats and steam launches; don't get 'em here much, that's one comfort." And then he told me that he had been jack fishing the previous week, between Laleham and Chertsey, and was fortunate enough to hook a good fish. "Well, perhaps, a ten or twelve pounder, you know," and the fish, it seems, had run out thirty or forty yards of line, and was still running too strongly to be checked, when, "what should I see," and here I'll take up his narrative in his own words, "a coming round the bend like mad, but a boat's crew o' them chaps with the striped guernseys—puts one in mind o' barber's poles, they does, and though I hollered to 'em with all my might, and they must have heard me; they kept right on, and, would you believe me, they rowed on clean over my line and the fish, and smashed me up like a carrot." Would I believe it? Yes, I would, and a great deal more, from what I have seen lately. "Ah, and then they roared with laughing at me," said he, with a comical expression of face; "but, perhaps, if I'd had fair play, and their best man on the bank, the laugh might have been on my side at the finish." From what I know of him I think it more than likely.

Everywhere I go I hear the like complaints made both by residents on the river's brink and by visitors, who are not boating or steam launch mad, against the abominable thoughtlessness and selfishness displayed by both classes of men, but more particularly against those who, possessing a specimen of these noisy little toy steamers, go shrieking with their whistles up and down the river reaches, destroying that very quiet which induces wealthy men either to build for themselves, or rent at an enormous figure, the splendid mansions that adorn the banks of the stream, washing away the banks by the high rate of speed at which the craft are driven, and doing all that in them lies to make both themselves and their snorting, wheezing little tugs thoroughly objectionable. Some of these days an accident of so serious a nature—and serious because some other than an humble, and, possibly, obscure angler, may be the victim, will result, and then possibly a loud outcry will be raised. Pens of far more powerful calibre than mine will be wielded, and mayhap steam launches will—at any rate, out of the tideway and among the narrow stretches of the upper Thames—happily be numbered with the past. Any one who sees as much of the river as I do day by day can hardly fail to notice that ladies have of late years taken to rowing amongst their many accomplishments, possibly to the exclusion of more useful ones, such as the art of making a pudding or boiling a potato ; but, be that as it may, in the summer season many a boat goes by “manned”—by-the-by, is that the correct word ?—by some “sweet girl graduates” in

the use of the oar, and perhaps when some alder man's, or other big City magnate's, daughter gets upset by the swell caused by some heavily-laden launch, and drowned—though Heaven forbid!—then we may, perhaps, hear of an effectual stir being made. Boys are forbidden by law, and rigorously punished, for letting off fireworks, driving iron hoops, or discharging firearms amongst the crowded traffic of a great city, because of the very obvious danger to life and limb, and the possible destruction of property. Why, then, in the name of all that's reasonable, should "children of a larger growth" be permitted to drive these dangerous toys upon the "silent highway," when the possibility of destruction is equally as great, as far as human life is concerned, and the ratio far larger when riparian property is only considered. Not long ago my friend, who has been previously mentioned in some of these pages as "Uncle," and I, had engaged our Halliford man, Trodd, for a day in the Shepperton deeps. There we were pretty well out of the way of these nuisances; but one adjunct to the success of a day's fishing was missing, the fish could not be persuaded to bite, so that we moved towards the close of the day down stream to the "Chalk Hole." Before we had been there ten minutes we were saluted with an ominous shriek from a whistle behind, and three of these sweet boats went by at varying rates of speed. One had the courtesy to pull up, and passed us at a pace, and hugging the shore, that would have done little or no harm; but the last, a boat painted black and flying a

large Union Jack at the stern, and which I afterwards learnt was "the Lucy" of Hampton, went by and close to us, without the slightest decrease of speed, and when the puntman made some remark to the effect that they "might as well have eased a bit," the occupants deliberately put on a full head of steam, and nearly succeeded in washing us adrift—perhaps their intention—although I should be sorry to think so. After this I was convinced fishing was useless, and when we got back to Halliford I found the same boat had passed other anglers fishing at "the point," and her high speed had been commented upon by others than ourselves. The sooner something is done by which such proceedings are checked, and what is more, if persisted in, punished, and that severely, the better.

## THE WRAYSBURY FISHERY.

DIRECTLY after passing Staines, on the South-Western, a traveller can hardly fail to notice the Colne, which, suddenly shooting out from behind the large mills on the left-hand of the railway line, pursues a very snaky course through the meadows, and, if he is a fisherman, the appearance and general aspect of this very charming stream must at once interest him ; albeit he gets but a glimpse here and there as he rattles over the river on his way to the next station, Wraysbury. Arrived there, and barely a minute's walk from the booking office, the river pops in sight again, and before crossing the bridge directly in front of the station yard, an extremely pretty cottage residence to the left of the stream is sure to be noticed, and here—as all good fishers should do upon arriving upon a strange water—we will turn and inquire for the proprietor. “No, sir, Mr. Heath don't live here,” said a rosy-cheeked, bright-eyed six-year old lassie, who, sitting in the warm sunshine, was maternally occupied with a sadly damaged one-eyed doll, and then added, after comfortably propping up her toy baby against the fence, “He lives yonder, down that yard.” So down “that yard” I went, to find myself in the middle of some farm buildings, environed with stacks and old red-tiled barns, covered as to the roofs with a rich

crop of moss and lichens, red and yellow, and fenced in with fine old trees, "a bit" that taken as a whole, would have made a study worthy of the eloquent pencil of Birket Foster. Here, in the corner, is the snug little domicile of Josiah Heath of Longford, who now rents the water, and whose name has been well known for years, both as an enthusiastic student of natural history and a thoroughly practical man in everything that appertains to pisciculture. I found him, I regret to say, a sad wreck from the ravages of a late severe attack of illness, although I sincerely hope that he may soon be able to say, "I'm myself again!" for he is just one of those cheery, old-fashioned gossips one can't afford to lose. Just at this point I may give the stranger to this water a valuable hint. Wraysbury is a pretty village enough, but a very straggling one, and the nearest house, the Green Man, is some distance from the station. Now, a cup of tea after a cold day's winter fishing is a grand refresher, and should the visitor here, at the finish of his day, incline to "the cup that cheers," &c., just let him drop in at the worthy proprietor's cottage and ask for "Sarah," a young lady who is about the nearest approach that I have seen yet, in my piscatory wanderings, to Walton's famous maid who whipped the syllabub, and I'll warrant he'll get such a fragrant cup, with the adjuncts of sweetest butter and new-laid eggs, as he will find it hard to beat between this spot and London. Opposite the cottage the water is very shallow, not more than a foot or so deep, although a hole or two exist of good depth in

several places. The dace in the summer time — and very large ones amongst them — haunt these shallows in hundreds, and a good trout now and again wakes up the echoes of the stream as he jumps lustily after a hovering fly. Trees, however, hang over both sides of this strictly bit of fly water, so that to fish it properly, wading must be resorted to, and with a light hand and skilful cast it would, I am assured, pay for fishing. We will cry “halt” at the railway bridge, a hundred yards lower down, and peep over at the shoals of large roach that are to be seen under the centre arch— of course if the water is sufficiently clear. The best plan to adopt in fishing this excellent swim is to have the punt moored say a dozen or fourteen yards above the bridge, and then with fine Nottingham tackle, float down, and right through the arch. Beware though, brother fisherman, for the chub here are “something awful,” and if they *do* take a fancy to the gentles, as it seems frequently is the case, they will *only* do so just as the float gets well within the shade of the arch, then the instant they feel the hook, bolt with resistless rush for the open piles of the bridge, and if they gain their haven depend on it there’s a pretty knotty problem to work out before they are induced to return to the open water. After clearing the bridge, we get splendid jack water, with thick beds of rush and sedge on either side, and plenty of cover in the shape of old roots of trees, and overhanging reeds, to shelter both pike and chub. Just at this spot I took a handsome little fish, spotted like a leopard,



the other day with snap tackle, and not a dozen yards from the bridge. Plenty of time for jack fishing in this water on ahead of us; the weeds are still thick, though getting rotten, wanting another good frost or two, and some heavy rain, and then perhaps Mr. Docwra's achievement may be rivalled, though hardly beaten, of getting nineteen good jack in one day, and all taken spinning! More power to him! On the opposite side to the path we are pursuing we are supposed to be in the meadows on the house side of the water, at the end of the sedge beds there is a very excellent roach swim, and at the tail of the swim a hole of eight feet deep, with a gravel bottom. Here the barbel hang about, and frequent smashes of tackle, good as it may be, is the result—then twenty yards below the hole large beds of sedgy weedy growth indicate the locality wherein a live bait might be advantageously employed. Still on the same side of the stream we come to a place where three little willow stumps project, and this spot the roach fisher should not pass without a trial. It is the bathing-place of the Wraysbury youth, and is consequently very free from weed in the summer season—not more than four feet deep, however; but "'tis enough," and if the angler keep well back and out of sight, it will repay him, for there are plenty of roach there, and at this identical spot a Mr. Thorpe, a subscriber, took thirty pounds of good fish, about Sept. 1877, with hair tackle, and baiting with paste. Some hundred yards below this the river sweeps round to the left—

and bear in mind we are passing rare jack water on the way—and opens out into a wide expanse, with a row of willows to the right of us. This is called “The Upper Broad Water,” and is perhaps some seventy yards across, and two hundred yards in length, very shallow, however, yet a famous haunt for dace and spanking chub, which rise readily on a favourable day at a large red or black palmer, skilfully thrown. Just here, I came across the track of an otter, and friend Heath told me that “he had been waiting on his lordship several times,” and, as I know he generally uses straight shooting powder, it is just possible that his ottership may by this time have been killed. Now we arrive at a stile which, in boyhood’s days, would have been “taken flying,” but which I, at any rate, negotiate more sedately now, and it will be worth while, reader mine, if the pipe is out, to fill it here, and, “sitting on a rail,” rest, smoke, and be thankful, and let the eyes wander over the glorious panorama that Nature, the only exhibitor here, has spread out with bounteous hand for one’s delectation. One grand stretch of hill and dale, with the almost mountainous slopes of the Egham hills, and the rising grounds of Ankerwyke, dimly seen in the blue, misty distance, while to the right, Windsor’s grey towers top the trees, filling up a scene of exquisite beauty. Well, the pipe being lighted, we’ll push on, first noting at the opposite side “Pither’s Corner,” an excellent swim for all-round fishing when the water is high and coloured, and under these circumstances with a capital “back

eddy," to which the fish always seek refuge from the swift main stream. Then, in the third meadow from the house, we reach "Taylor's Common," and here we get roach swims without any trouble, but some forty yards from "Taylor's Ford," and eighty from the clump of willows, is a spot that is fairly marked on the bank, and from which Mr. Docwra, previously mentioned, has made some wonderful bags of roach, on one occasion taking forty pounds of splendid fellows, plenty of pounders among them, to his own rod in one day. The swim is not more than four feet deep, but a very pretty one, and wants fishing with a long rod, and the wielder well out of view. Another stile, and over this into the fourth meadow, we strike "the Lower Broads," with plenty of weedy vegetation and reed beds for jack cover; indeed, pike water is at every point, with two good roach swims on the opposite side. About forty or fifty yards at most from the stile is a swim of notoriety, which has been recently christened the "Lower Broad Swim." It is marked by a little rising knoll of ground, is five feet deep when the river is at an ordinary level, has a pure gravelly bottom as level as a drawing-room floor, while the current is gentle in the extreme. At this very place Mr. Thorp took in twenty hours' fishing one hundred and twelve pounds of large roach. On the principle that "good wine needs no bush," I need say no more save to commend it to my brothers of the rod, and wish them as grand sport when they may sit down here. From *this* the water generally deepens, and jack and

chub are there in plenty, with every appearance of perch, but somehow this fish does not seem over plentiful in this water, although what there are are very large as a rule. The end of the fourth meadow brings us to some picturesque cottages, and through the gate we enter "The Paddock," with a long row of willows hanging over the stream. Between the second and third tree is a swim, the deepest on the water, and in the later months of the year is the time to fish it. It is fully nine feet deep, and monstrous chub lie all along this stretch, sheltered by the roots of the trees that go sheer down into the water. Barbel are here as well, so that it behoves the angler to use great care when fishing, and I should decidedly eschew tight lines and hair. Under these trees it is difficult to say where there is a bad swim, but at the foot of the nineteenth willow from the gate is a place that will instantly commend itself, and with good reason, for it is an excellent sitting. Better water for legering could hardly be imagined, and old cheese would surely tell a tale amongst the chub; while, if the punt is brought down, and one end fastened to a stout ryepeck, what work could be done on a clear wintry day with pith and brains, and using Nottingham tackle under the boughs! Just this little game I have since tried there with some excellent results. And now we are getting very nearly to the end of our tether, for "Hythe End Bridge" looms in sight; and we have splendid deep and varied water at each hand. The "Bridge Swim" is on the opposite side, and Heath tells me it is "the best on

the river," and well it may be, for it looks perfection. Colne fish are notoriously capricious, so that the angler who fishes here for the first time, and goes away with a light bag, must not come to the conclusion that there are no fish, for I can assure him there are, and plenty of them. It is a water where the finest tackle is of unquestionable value, and being, as a rule, brilliantly clear, Piscator should never lose sight of the fact that fish can see him when he doesn't see them, and "act accordin'." Well, here's the Feathers, a humble little public, but pulling a rare good glass of malt. So friend Heath and I turned in, discussed the product of the Feathers tap, and after wishing him the best of all goods in this life, "restored health," I pushed on, still down the stream, past some glorious "shops," tabooed though, and a short walk brought me to the mouth of the Colne, where it joins the Thames, a little below the Bell Weir, now in course of repair, at Egham. "Boat ahoy! Hilliho!" Presently a wooden-legged Charon emerges from the Angler's Rest, hard by the lock, a funny little Thames-side public, and soon I stand safe and sound on the other side, and then walk on down stream for Staines, passing some likely-looking bank fixture on the way, one in particular sixty or seventy yards below Timm's bathing place, and nearly level with the church; here is seemingly very deep water, no weeds, and altogether a very likely-looking spot. At last we may congratulate ourselves upon the first blow being struck at the steam launch nuisance; and we may fairly hope that now that the public press

has lately pointed out in the very full reports given of the Old Windsor running down case, some of the by-laws of the Thames Conservancy rules, which by-laws these boats are bound to submit to, both anglers and owners of property on the banks of our noble river will look more strictly after their own interests. For the sake of those very interests, if not from the desire to carry out a public duty, they should insist, whenever practicable, that offending launches shall conform to law, and if they do not, seek to obtain a punishment both upon owners and men employed by them, wherever such laws are infringed. It clearly becomes illegal, by the 28th by-law, for these boats to be navigated other than in "a careful and proper manner," and, by the 46th, to be worked "at such speed as shall endanger or cause damage to other vessels, or cause any injury to the banks of the river." That being so, it becomes a question for those who feel the annoyance most keenly, to take steps to prevent it. It is a matter entirely in their own hands, and, if taken up at all, should be pursued vigorously and effectually until the nuisance is "stamped out." It is of no use to be apathetic in the matter, or for Brown to trust to Smith to do something, and Smith to hope that Robinson, or Jones, more plucky than he, will take it up—not a bit of it, let Brown strike, and strike hard, as being the first aggrieved, and as soon as he does so others will follow. This year it is too late for many chances to offer. The steam launcher is very like a butterfly, or some of the gaudy ephemera of the river, and no sooner do the wintry

winds begin to blow, and the red and yellow leaves to fall, swirling and eddying in the stream, than he retires into the chrysalis shape until the following season ; but 1879 will find him shrieking and puffing away as hard and as fast as ever, and utterly oblivious of the too merciful decision of the Bench at Berks Petty Sessions. Then's the time, and I sincerely hope and trust that a fresh blow may be struck, and something like adequate redress may be obtained whenever the river laws are broken. At present it seems that peaceable gudgeon fishers may be forcibly thrown out from their punt, and run the risk of finding a watery grave, while one or more of their number may be seriously hurt, at a cost to the erratic launchers of 3*l*, with costs. Perhaps the bench of magistrates were induced to take a lenient view of the affair from the fact that the able counsel engaged endeavoured to show that the rudder chains were broken. Granted this, surely the engines could have been reversed, the crew knowing of the mishap, before actually running down the fishing party, as well as immediately afterwards.

## THE THAMES AT WINDSOR. BANK FISHING AT ATHENS.

A COLD grey dawn ; fog shrouding the streets in thick heavy waves of vapour, altogether unpromising, ushered in the month, and cheerless "chill November" was realised by the early riser for the first time in the year. As I turned out to catch an early train, I was compelled to button up an extra bit of my thick fishing coat, and pulled my muffler tighter, for the white mist seemed to creep in at every cranny. By the time that I had got to the South Western it seemed inclined to clear a little, and as I mounted the steep incline for the Loop line side, and noticed that what little wind there was came from the friendly west, comforted myself with the reflection that the roach were sure to feed after all. No man comforts himself more with the pleasures of hope than does the angler ; well it is that he does so, for there are a good many blanks in the piscatorial lottery, at the best of times, and a red letter day must be made the most of when it turns up. Windsor itself, fine old town, lies snugly ensconced under the shadow of the lofty, grey battlements of the Castle, and standing on the bridge, looking down stream towards Datchet, the view is superb, and, perhaps, in all the varied hues of a late autumn, as beautiful as in the leafy luxuriance of summer tide. Here



comes a whole fleet of happy Eton lads, bound for the playing fields and football, they wheel round by the funny little tackle shop at the foot of the bridge, and we'll follow them, for the road leads direct to the Brocas's and the river. No place on the Thames that I have yet visited, save, perhaps, Penton Hook, is so prolific of bank swims as Windsor. Here they are in profusion, and all sorts of fishing can be obtained, while the scenery around is charming. A stile stops us at the end of the lane, and over that, we are in a wide and extensive meadow, with the river on the left-hand, and right ahead a curiously grown, yet magnificent, group of elms, known as the "Artist's Clump of Trees," which at once rivets the attention of a student of Nature. Immediately opposite these trees, the water, close in to the bank, begins to deepen. The bottom seems clayey in character, but hard and firm, and if the wandering piscator treads with a fisherman's caution, and peers quietly into the depths of the stream, ample evidence will be seen, in the shape of many a good perch and chub lying close in to the bank, of opportunity to exercise his skill, and there are besides a dozen places at least where the feet of previous sitters have worn little platforms in the clay, any of which are likely to turn out profitable "shops." Presently we get to a little quaintly built wooden bridge, which spans an outlet from the main stream, and here again, when the water is clear, perch of fair size may be seen congregated round the piles and wooden buttresses. Should the angler care to follow this stream through the meadow, I know of

no obstruction to his progress, but the water is very shallow in the summer time, and only of value to the fly rod. Capital dace then seek the gravelly scours, and many a good chub lies safely hidden under the roots of the trees on the opposite side. Soon, however, what is evidently a deeper pool is reached, bounded by strong timber piles driven deep into the bed of the stream, on the one hand, while a portion of the meadow is fenced in. This is strictly private, and forms the training ground, wherein the younger lads from the college matriculate before attempting higher swimming honours. After a flush of water this pool holds many good jack and perch, and can be nicely fished from boat or punt moored amongst the willows on the opposite side. Still higher up, the stream sweeps round a bend, and forms an uncommonly "fishy"-looking lay-by. On the opposite side to the bathing place, and at sittings that can be easily reached by pursuing the river path instead of wending through the meadows, two or three first-class swims present themselves, from which this bend can be nicely fished. Roach in any quantity are here, and occasionally a real banger falls a victim to a bit of white paste, particularly if an arrow-root biscuit, with all the brown surface carefully scraped away, has been used in its composition. I have tried many pastes for roach, and some of very fanciful manufacture ; but nothing has yet been found, in my opinion, to beat this. Carefully made, and with just sufficient water to fairly moisten the biscuit before working it up, it will be found to be an extremely white and

very lasting paste, a good killer into the bargain. This little stream now again joins the main river, and at its mouth there is an excellent swim for roach fishing on the right side of the bridge; the angler who fishes it, however, must have a long rod to get out, and thick-soled boots, well anointed, to prevent damp getting in, for the swim is "all among the rushes," and sometimes a bit soft. The reader will now understand that we have again joined the Thames proper, and immediately in front of us, and not too far to throw leger or pater-noster from the bank, is the "Old Barge Hole," a capital deep for perch and jack. Here the water is twelve to fourteen feet in depth, but with a muddy bottom, while the roach swim previously mentioned, which forms one side of it, is gravelly. Then turning to the right we follow the towing path towards Surly Hall, and the swims that follow at every dozen yards or so leave plenty of choice, both for depth and character. Finally, then, we come to "Athens," the place where the Beckwiths and Johnsons among the collegians, disport their lusty limbs in the deep, swift stream. Again there are piles, driven squarely and deep down, while a sort of platform, built of earth and timber, projects over the river, forming a splendid take off for a plunge in the eddying water. And now hold, for here is an excellent level bottom, and roach galore in the wintry months. The tail end of a lob is a rattling bait for them, therefore just at this spot I stopped, nothing loth to ease my shoulders of the rod and pack. "No

fog here, thank goodness," is a remark I make to myself while I light my pipe, and what a glorious view is in front of my position! To the right lies the town, with the Castle towering above it—a great stretch of hill and dale, the blue and misty woods fading into the sky line, while to the left, peeping through the trees, the turreted spires of the College loom through the now nearly denuded branches of the elms, while all around is mellowed with a still hazy, though warm November sun. Just above where the bathing place is formed, a little bit of the bank projects, forming a good sitting for the angler who fishes this site, as I did, with a Nottingham rod, and very fine running tackle, these little implements were soon fitted together, and the gut bottom thrown in to soak, while I chopped up a handful of lobs as a sweetener, throwing them in at the top of the swim. And now for a nice silvery tail end for the hook, and away sails my green and white float, while my hopes travel with it. A good five and twenty yards down without a motion, save where the ripples play round my float, as I hold it lightly back. This wont do—so I wind up, and add a foot at least to the depth, and start afresh. Now, my float tells another story, and "trips" every now and then as it catches the bottom on its journey. Half an hour sped by without a fish, and I was perforce compelled to sacrifice another sprinkling of lobs, and at the next swim I get a bite; no mistake about it, an undoubted "bob, bob," that said, as plainly as ever Fechter did, "I am here." "Come on, my beauties," said I to myself, "and

I'll handle you an' though I loved you." Bob, responds my float ; then another little dip. Not a bit of use striking, though, at such nibbles as these ; then I find that I am at the end of my swim, and reel up and light my pipe afresh, that had died out under the influence of the little attentions paid by the fish in the previous run down. Off again, with the thin silk held tight from the cap of the float, and just as I near the spot that I had marked in my eye as being the likely place, "green body and white cap" quietly pops out of sight, like a steeple-chaser that negotiates a fence with a deep drop on the far side, then pops up again, and makes his own running at right angles across the course. That's the kind of bite, and up goes the top joint, while wriggle, wriggle, tug, tug, tells me the hook is home ; he fights lustily and well, and shoots out for the deeper water every now and then, making me think I must have got a veritable "grouser" at last, at any rate, if a roach. It proves, however, to be a little chub, and after seeing him snugly ensconced amongst the rushes at the bottom of my basket I proposed his health and my own in a tot of "eye water," and found another lob. My float had barely travelled a yard from under my nose, when away it went, and this time an impertinent perch paid the penalty of his rashness, and, with his black stripes and ruby fins, looked a pretty contrast to my bronze-backed chub. Then, in the very next swim, I got a handsome roach, gleaming like a bar of silver, and another, a good pounder, fairly bolted the worm the following swim, and

after a stab or two for the deep water, lay gasping and shimmering in the glorious sunlight, with his companions on the flags. "I wish 'Uncle' were here," thought I, "how he would glory in this," and the next moment I wished still more that he were with me, for I hooked something that sent my winch-handle whizzing round at a deuce of a rate, and pulled like a dray horse, straight for the middle of the river. To attempt to check him I knew would be useless, from the weight and strain on the fine line ; so for the next twenty yards I "let him slide," and then he stopped himself, seemingly uncertain of his next move. Reeling up very carefully, I got a tight strain on at last, felt him try to shake himself clear, and then he started for a fresh run, with seemingly all his energies renewed. The winch revolved at a tremendous rate, and I dare not attempt any strain when the fish was running, for that he was a monster of some sort I did not doubt, and suspicion pointed to a heavy chub. Well, I was very careful, for, with the gossamer tackle I had on, a fresh hearty fish of some size at the end of the line, it was useless to attempt any liberties, so I let him have it much his own way for the next two or three minutes, merely keeping the line taut, and giving to him more with the wrist than with the reel. These tactics proved to be the right ones, and presently his lordship seemed inclined to be a little more amiable, and neared the side—nearer, still nearer—come along my beauty! I knelt down, regardless of the mud, so as to get the landing-net well under water. The next instant

I viewed him dead beat, and, to my surprise, my monster chub, that I had been dreaming of as set up by Needham with suitable inscription, "caught by J. P. W. at so and so, &c.," turned out to be a little barbel, some two pounds, perhaps, hooked foul under the fin. Curiously, too, he had only one eye, so that he had seemingly been in the wars before, but this time I got at the blind side of him. Well, barbel, roach, chub and perch look well side by side; and, I thought, as I sat and munched my lunch that, if I could manage to delude a decent jack or two the creel would turn out respectably. "Three o'clock, eh!"—this I found out from my watch—and just about their feeding time. I hardly liked turning up the swim after yielding so well, so was obliged to have another swim or two down, settled another roach, and then I was startled by a splash at my back, and the next moment a little shoal of dace skipped over the surface of the stream, and "Johnnie" was surely there. So now to try my new spinning bait, "the Sylph," kindly sent to me for trial by Messrs. Bowness, of the Strand. It is wonderfully well got up—made from bone, and spins very truly, but wants working smartly. It is soon fitted up to a little rod that is almost a jack of all trades, and a great favourite, and cast number one is made, with no result, close in to the bank, and the bait spun right up to the very edge of the rushes. Then I make casts right and left, until I am assured that I must have covered the feeding fish several times, without his deigning to notice the bait. I begin to lose heart in my

"Sylph." However, I resolved to have one more cast, and out flew my bait on a fresh voyage of discovery. Certainly "la sylphide" spins admirably, and comes pirouetting round the corner of a bed of rushes, when a heavy roll in the water, and a lunge at the bait, tell tales, and up flies my hand, instantly followed by a scream from the reel as "Johnnie" plunges for the bottom. "Bravo, my little Sylph," said I, half aloud, while my pulse beat quickly with that glorious impulse that an angler feels when he's fast in a—"good un," my fish ploughing along with a really noble rush, and utterly unlike the puny efforts of the June starvelings—shame on the man who tries for them. "Steady, my lad," this to the fish as he makes a bolt for the reeds, checked on my part firmly, yet gently. Now he flies to the surface, and then, blinking at the sunshine, rolls down again, while the waveless stream eddies into long ripples, marking the place where he broke cover. What a feeling of triumph thrills through one, as, all alone, no sound near, to sing the requiem of a good fish, save the whisper of the tall reeds, and the plaint of the peewit overhead as he wings his way to the stubble-fields. One sees the fish, beaten at last with quiet tact, yet, even when beaten, gamely trying for a final struggle, roll his broad sides, with tail sullenly beating the waves, and then at each successive strain from the good rod, arched like a bow, give in bit by bit, and at last he turns up like a log on the water, and comes to the side with his cruel snout and long-fanged jaws snapping in futile anger. And what



a beauty this fellow is to be sure. As he lies on the faded grass amongst the red and yellow leaves, with sides spotted like a leopard, he looks indeed a worthy subject for the easel of the inimitable Rolfe, and I finish my "eye water" in his sole honour this time, and come to the conclusion that I've had a very fair day. As I turn for the station after packing up, I have time to notice the splendid water at "Clewer Point," terribly deep, full of jack and perch, and its barbel swim close by. But fading day warns me that I have a good walk in front, so I push on, and cross Windsor Bridge just as the cold wintry moon begins to peep out from the grey sky.

Since these pages were written I have made many other visits to this glorious stretch of the Thames, and had some good bags of barbel, chub, perch, and jack from its waters in the neighbourhood. The Railway Bridge has a capital barbel swim with deep heavy water—whilst many others, which it is impossible to point out by particular landmarks, lie between the Weir at Boveney and the Town Bridge. To strangers visiting the neighbourhood and desiring fishing there, my advice is to go at once to the New Inn, Eton—see its genial host, dear old Dick Goddard, beloved by every one; he will make all anglers right royally welcome. His house is one of the good, old-fashioned sort, where the motto is "live and let live," and where war prices do not obtain; and as to fishermen, "Nottingham George," one of the most intelligent men of his class, and the two Grays, both of them thoroughly good men, can be heard of at the hostelry I have mentioned.

## THORNEY BROAD FISHERY.

"HAIL, smiling morn!" was a fit reflection as I started for Paddington on my way to West Drayton, and Godfrey's pretty section of the Colne, for the sun was up right merrily, and all Nature wore her earliest spring smiles as a welcome to the traveller, whether pedestrian or angler. I might, however, have kept the reflection to myself until at my journey's end, for just as my train steamed into the station black clouds, heavily charged, sailed over head, and by the time I had got some hundred yards down the little footpath that the Great Western Company have kindly conceded to the subscribers to this water, and which is found directly to the right hand upon clearing the station yard, down came such a pelter, hail and rain together, that I offered up mental congratulations on the score of not being deluded into leaving my Gamp behind! Confound the east wind!—ruination to trout fishing; it whistled and screamed with spite across the flat meadows, the hailstones drumming on my umbrella the while; and how glad I was when Godfrey's little snugery hove in sight I'll leave it to others to determine. "Well, sir, you *have* had a shower, but come along in, and have a drop of something warm to keep the cold out." I hadn't the slightest objection, and while my host took my dripping gingham and went for the "something

warm," I had time to look about me. Not so old and quaint in its belongings as many fishing stations I have been to, it yet gives one the idea of a piscatory retreat, standing shaded by some giant poplars; and one in which the cares of the world may be easily forgotten if one is so minded. Fish in their glass cases, each with its suitable inscription, hang on the walls side by side with coloured prints of some of my dear friend Rolfe's angling studies, while directly opposite, the swiftly rippling river, dotted with scores of moorhens and dabchicks, flows smoothly by. "No, I don't like to have 'em shot, sir," said my host Godfrey, on my saying that they were more like barn-door fowls from their tameness than wild water-fowl. "It seems to me they make the river complete, and on a fine summer's evening you may see hundreds of 'em from this window; many a time I've had a laugh over their pranks," and I thoroughly agreed with him. No prettier sight in the world, in my opinion, than an old moorhen, or a stately mamma duck, with the drake, a wary old rascal, bringing up the rear, leading their flock of dusky, half-fledged younglings, out from the sedge and rushes, just as the golden sunset tinges the waters with its dying glory. "Well, here's the sun again, thank goodness; and now, Godfrey, for a look over the water." In front of the bow windows is a curious little bridge, and, on the left of it, a small fish stew, wherein baits are kept. A weir, where the stream flows rapidly over a stone ledge, some wooden piles and camp sheathing, is crossed by means of this bridge, the piles and

timber portions to all appearance rapidly falling into decay. As a rule I have the greatest possible objection to "improving" upon old fixtures, and particularly in the matter of fish haunts ; but here I think it is really needed, for the piles collect great quantities of *débris*, and some day in a heavy flood will have too great a strain, though I doubt not the ponderous perch and trout that I am assured lie snugly ensconced among the ancient woodwork would seek quieter quarters at the first tap from the workman's hammer. Turning to the right hand when over the bridge and through the wood-yard, a stile confronts us, across this we get into a meadow ; and here I was heartily amused with the gambols of a fine lot of Suffolk colts that were stretching across the grass at a fast gallop, pulling up for a moment with manes and tails streaming in the wind, to have a look at us, and then off again. Crossing the footbridge seen in front, turning to the right hand, and through the railway arch, we strike the water. This is the Iver river, and the crack trout quarters of the fishery. Ay, surely there are trout here, for "trouty" it looks every inch of it. On the opposite side to where we are standing, and close to two large alder trees, is a noted swim for roach, some six or seven feet deep, with a delightful curl and eddy. Here a once famous rod—one Hendriks—used to "get among 'em" with a vengeance ; and there are as well several "bits" on our side that look likely water for bottom fishing. The stream here, however, appeals more to the eye of the fly fisher—shallows with swift current, subtle and cunning-looking

glides and curls, with every now and then a deep hole, marked by its heavier current, wherein thumping chub lie hidden. Just as friend Godfrey and I turned the next bend a brace of ducks, the sun lighting up the drake's bronze green neck, jumped up from the rushes, uttering a startled note of alarm, and went sailing over the meadows ; and now we get some hundred yards or more of deep, heavy jack water, right up to the plank bridge—an awkward crossing in the dark, methinks. Another run of purely fly water, first sharps and shallows, with the yellow gravel and deep green weeds twisting and curving with the stream, then holes and deeps, with the banks fairly open for the fly, and presently we reach the Ford, always a sure hold for a big trout. Here we stop to peer into the clear water, but the sun is just now obstinately hidden, and we can make nothing of it. Ha, here's a gleam at last, and next instant the cloud is gone. "Look there, sir," says Godfrey, "close by that white patch—he's a decent fish, eh?" Decent, indeed, if a splendid crimson-spotted fellow of five or six pounds can be called decent ; and presently I saw another not quite so large. "Our fishermen can't get those big ones—many have tried—but I think a big fly at the very last gleam of light would be the thing." "Yes, or a bleak nicely spun," I rejoined, as we travelled on. "Well, we've kept this up to this year strictly as fly water, but I intend to throw it open for spinning now," he replied. Trout fishers, here's your chance, and within an hour of London ! Clambering over the stile at the end of this

stretch, we get into a meadow, and from here to the bridge, seen on ahead, is the very cream of the trout water on the whole stream in Godfrey's occupation, the banks perfectly open, without a single tree, until we reach the two great oaks that hang over the stream, partially shutting out the view, and nothing to obstruct a cast with "Governor," "Red Hackle," or "Black Palmer," three flies that will kill as well as anything at the proper season. From the oak-trees we get a charming view, the old red-brick bridge, Iver Bridge, patched with grey and green lichens and mosses, with one of those square, brick-built mansions that look so purely English, half-shut in by great firs and cedars, further in the background ; while to the left the grey tower of the village church, peeping among the trees on an elevated slope of ground, which descends until the brink of the flashing, glittering stream is reached, make up a picture that it would be hard, indeed, to find fault with. Many large trout are known to lie between these oaks and the bridge, but the wind was bitterly keen and chill ; there was not a symptom of fly on the water, so their majesties declined to be in the least degree amiable, by indulging in a rise, at any price. When upon the bridge several fish were seen upon the shallows, but none of any great size, together with a large shoal of dace, that were circling backwards and forwards, seemingly in one prescribed portion of the river. The garden appertaining to the mansion I have previously mentioned runs down to the water's edge on the further side of the bridge, and is finely wooded with ever-

greens—giant laurels and arbutus, that hang half-over the stream, affording rare shade and harbourage for heavy trout and chub. And now we are regretfully compelled to bid adieu to the sweet little Iver stream, and have to take the lane to the right-hand of the bridge, at the foot of which is the Colne proper. Turning abruptly at the end of the lane, a stile presents itself, and over this, and following the hedge to the left we reach some really splendid roach water, with deep slow swims, memorable from being the scene of the contest between Mr. Hendriks, previously mentioned, and Woodard, the Lea champion. Roach swims are at hand all along this meadow, but time will not permit me to go over the whole of the large extent of water, so that I am perforce compelled to retrace my steps and cross the little bridge that will be found immediately in front of the lane. This bridge is the Godfrey boundary of the Colne water, so that after crossing it we turn to the right, which leads us towards the house again, and presently a corner is reached famous for its large store of tench. It is a portion of what was in former years a large bay or arm of the river, bounded on both sides by dense and tangled reed beds, which have been gradually filled up, partly by the action of time, partly by man, and a roadway made through its midst. The tench hole, which is very deep, and looks to me eminently like a jack hole as well, can only be fished from a boat, and wants well baiting with lobs before fishing. A short distance below, a swift little stream affording plenty of dace and chub angling with the fly

attracts attention ; this is the "Sewer Ditch," not a pretty title by any means, but it looks a deal better and more fishful than its name would lead one to imagine ; and at the mouth of the sewer itself, which runs from Uxbridge, a trout or two of large size always lies. Here Mr. Hawkins, a subscriber to the water, took a trout of four pounds, the very next day another angler got one of five, and shortly afterwards a trout of four pounds was taken, but of course replaced, by Mr. Godfrey, from the mouth of the sewer, while using the cast net for some dace. Further on is "Shoulder of Mutton Corner," all famous and time-honoured water for the piscator. At the extreme angle of the corner a very deep hole with a fine eddy is found ; again a rare haunt of the "water physician." All the way down this meadow are glorious roach swims, the more notable among them plainly marked by the feet of previous users, and a style with a row of fine willows denotes one of the most certain spots for the chub fisher. The root of an old oak, projecting slightly from the herbage, marks a once famous roach swim, "the Old Oak Swim," as a matter of course, and one that had, years ago, a great reputation for the quantity and quality of its supplies. Since, however, time has claimed the old tree for its own, the river's run has also been diverted by the filling up of the more well-known channel, and the "Old Oak," and the "Broken Willow Swim," one hundred yards lower, do not sustain their ancient reputation ; but here is "York's Swim," a first-class bit of water that makes me regret that I have



but an umbrella in my fist as I pass it. This sitting has, and still does, yield excellent baskets of handsome roach, as do other swims, but with no special name, right down to the house, which we presently reach again by crossing the railway line. Beware, however, of the swift Great Western engines. Two sad accidents have happened here to incautious crossers. My long walk makes a tankard of Godfrey's excellent ale go down uncommonly well previous to an exploration of the lower end of the fishery; and, after a short rest, and a fresh pipe, we make another start, with you, I trust, reader, as companion. We have again to cross the bridge and the little weir in front of the house; but this time turn to the left hand, and follow the stream. All along this meadow is deep, slow jack water, capital alike for spinning or live bait, and one or two heavy fish for the Colne have been taken here this season. Close to the stile, at the end of the first meadow, is a very curious whirlpool, a miniature maelstrom, caused by the action of a large suction pipe below the surface of the stream, which carries off surplus water under the pathway, falling into a deep pool on the right-hand of the river, which in its turn flows into some of the numerous little streams that meander through the meadows. The pool holds plenty of good roach and a few heavy tench, and is, I believe, at the service of the subscribers. Still following the course of the stream, which here begins to widen out wonderfully, and presents quite an expansive appearance, with sedge and rush beds on either hand—jack water every bit of it—we reach the

"Ballast Hole," a capital harbour for fish, and close by this we found the best part of a very large roach, a full two-pounder, that had been killed and partly eaten by an otter ; the sooner this fellow encounters a charge of No. 6 the better for the subscribers, I opine. The Millstream, with its flashing, foaming race, is seen on the left hand, but this is all private water, and an amusing tale is told of a Quaker, who rented or owned this mill some thirty years ago. It seems this stream has always held famous trout, and two anglers fished it with minnow the whole way up, watched by the miller, who saw them take fish after fish until they reached the mill tail. Then out he came, followed by a stalwart hand, and across the bridge, to the dire consternation of the two rodsters. "Dost thee know as thee's no right to fish here, friends?" No, of course they didn't—I'm afraid they did, though. "Well, then, let me tell thee that this water's mine, and thee is doing very wrong." Ample apologies, of course. "Well, now, what dost thee fish for?" was old broadbrim's next query. "Oh, for love of the sport, scenery, and fresh air." "Then thee dost not care for the fish so much?" "Oh no, it's not the fish, it's the sport itself." "Well, wilt thee let me see thy fish?" "Oh, surely," and out the trout, ten or eleven beauties, were turned from the panniers on to the green grass. "Now, John," said our friend the Quaker, turning to the man beside him, "These gentlemen don't care for the fish, 'it's the sport' ; thee'll take those trout in to thy mistress, John, and *thee'll* go home, I hope, now, my

friends, *and thee'd best not let me cateh thee here again.*" I had one peep at Drayton Weir, below the mill (all private water though), with the keeper's cottage, an exquisite little thatched gem of a house, hard by, and then turned for the house again, and some dinner, thoroughly tired with my long walk, but thoroughly pleased with the water at Thorney Broad.

## THE THAMES AT MAIDENHEAD.

NO more lovely and varied scenery can be found near our big town than in a run down the Great Western. I had long promised myself a peep over the Monkey Island water, and when at Windsor the other day tumbled, purely by chance, across the worthy proprietor of the hotel. I was standing chatting with a friend, when he joined us, and his first greeting was, "Why don't you run down and see our trout? we've got some beauties this year. Now, when will you come—next week? Agreed—I'll drive over and meet you at the station." So it was arranged, and when the morning came round it gave promise of being a delightful day for the expedition; the sun shining brilliantly, tempering the somewhat keen air with a welcome warmth, and making even dingy bricks and mortar look a trifle more cheerful than usual. At Westbourne Park I picked up my friend, and then, safely embarked on a quick train, rattled away to Slough without any stoppage. Over the Grand Junction Canal—many a good perch and bream have I had out of this in my boyhood's days—dashing over the high viaduct which spans the little Brent, another "river of the past," I regretfully remember, and so on till we reach the Colne at West Drayton. What spanking roach there are at Godfrey's, to be sure! and see under the bridge,

there is an angler fast in a grouser surely, for his long cane rod is describing that much-loved bow over something that is hooked, and pulling away for liberty. I declare one can fancy one hears the hair "tang!" How glorious is the soft green of early spring! lit up, as it is, by the bright sun, warm enough, as the rays fall through the carriage window, and out of the wind, to remind one of May even. Hill and dale and wooded slopes fading into the soft hues that delight an artist's eye, are all around us, and so much is the mind occupied with the rural graces of the scene, that we are at our journey's end almost before one could have wished it. At the station door stands our host with his dogcart, patting the head of a slapping big bay mare in the shafts, that catches my eye at once, a good one all over, and one that he tells us presently, with an exulting chuckle, "has pounded some real good un's" with the Queen's Staghounds this season. The view from Maidenhead Bridge is simply superb, and even now, without the help of the rich foliage of summer tide, one that once seen is not readily forgotten. To the north the glorious panorama of Taplow, Cliefden, and Hedsor unfolds itself. High up among the woods Cliefden glistens in the sun, with its white front and terraces. Again, one catches a peep of Hedsor, Lord Bolton's, and nearer to the right, a broad dark-blue flag flying from the turrets of a fine old building denotes alike Mr. Grenfell's seat, and the then fixture of the Oxford crew. To the south, the eye and ear are both delighted, the one with the sweep of

varied scenery, the tower of Bray Church peeping from the trees, the "bucks" and the moving craft, a barge, perhaps, with the bargee in a red cap walking slowly at the head of a string of horses, toiling against the swift stream—the other with the musical splash of falling water. Regretfully turning away from so beauteous a view, the bay mare rattles us through the somewhat straggling village, past the quaint old Market House, and so on to the high road and open country. We pull up at one or two wide ditches, and proceed on a little inspection, with a view to retrieve outlying chub and jack for the main river, but nothing rewards us until we get to Bray Cut, and there, a mighty shoal of large roach and dace, with a chub or two among them, are detected heading up the stream. A yokel stands watching them from the bridge, and volunteers the information that "there be a goodish few o' jackses and chubs'es further down, maister." Out goes our friend Plummer, active as a cat, the right man in the right place as an association-keeper for Maidenhead and its sister society at Windsor, I follow him, and presently we get ample evidence of the truth of the rustic's statement. Hardly a step is taken but a jack shoots out from the fringe of weed at the side, and many of them of good size, three and four-pounders, while the broad, dark tails of some weighty chub peeping out from the hollow banks, and under the submerged stumps, fix our attention. Creeping along with stealthy steps and a velvet foot, we find a somewhat deeper hole, and a cunning eye catches sight of a shoal of goodly

well, but not so much as usual the last season. Just at the tail of the island, and close to an extensive rush bed, is a rare jack shop, always productive of a brace of fish, even in bad times, and it certainly looks every inch of it a very likely spot for either live bait or paternoster. Another little island greets us as the swift current hurries our punt down, and here we pole in to have a peep at a swan already closely sitting, and of course another argument is at once started, anent the vexed question of "Do swans eat spawn?" "What," say Plummer and his son Bob, born fishers and river men both, "Do they eat spawn, sir? ay, that they do. Why, I've seen them strip the perch spawn off the boughs in ribbons many a time, and you can't drive them away either." Here is another ait, bushy and looking very likely as a chub haunt, which indeed it is, and capital jack ground as well—about one hundred yards below the top of this ait, dubbed "Sawyer's," is a spot famous for all time as the scene of one of the triumphs of Bailey of Nottingham, when he first introduced his elegant and now well-known style of fishing upon the Thames; one hundred weight of large barbel were taken by him from the bank, with lobworms, much to the astonishment of the *habitués* of the river, who had never thought much of the place before, save for the production of a few chub in the winter, or roach, &c., in the warmer portions of the year. And now we come to "Queen's Ait," one of the best "bits" for chub and jack on the river; here from the verge of the rush beds many

a mighty luce has bitten gimp for the last time, and at the tail of the island we get to the far-famed "Queen's Deep," a splendid run of heavy and subtle water, with a famous barbel swim twenty-five yards from the Bucks shore. From this swim Bob Plummer told me he had taken, while fishing with Mr. Cooper, one hundred and four pounds of barbel, nearly all large fish, with lobs, using the Nottingham tackle and leger, in one short day. On the opposite side (Berks) is a hole deep and holding, a sure find for perch and jack; and a little lower down, from a short stretch of good boughs, Mr. Jones, of London, took sixty-eight pounds of chub, while the snow was falling heavily. A plain, solid brick mansion is pointed out as Colonel Harford's; a beautifully kept lawn runs down to the river's brink, where the delicate pale foliage of the willows stands out in clear-cut contrast to the dark background of firs. Below the lawn are trimly kept meadows, where the sleek Alderneys seem to be welcoming the warm sun. All the way down the water is deep, affording plenty of jack fishing, and roach galore in the autumn months, and then we come to a magnificent castellated mansion, with a handsomely ornamented clock tower, the building being in perfect architectural keeping, where I am told Lord Otho Fitzgerald resides. The lawn is studded with curiously cut shrubs and some magnificent cedars and firs, while exactly opposite to the residence some of the best ground for the bank fisher is situated. Just below this our host's water ends, so that, after having a peep at the curious forcing



pump, driven by a large water-wheel, we were, perforce, compelled to turn for home. The sun, that had previously been shining so brilliantly all day, had now vanished, the wind was springing up too, and was bitterly keen, seeking out and finding open crannies in a moment. "We're in for a storm, Bob," said our host to his son, pointing out a dark, heavy bank of purple cloud sailing up with the wind, "look sharp, my lad!" Right well did our puntsman respond, but it was heavy work in the teeth of the rapidly approaching storm. The air had turned bitterly cold, but we were, fortunately, nearly at the tail of Monkey Island before the worst of it came. In one moment the wind came like a tornado, howling and shrieking, and at the same instant snow began to fall heavily. It was simply a hurricane for a few moments. Our craft was utterly unmanageable, and spun round, in the furious gale, like a teetotum, while the river, placid and calm ten minutes before, was lashed into chopping waves. As the snow fell, and, half-frozen, was driven sharply by the blast, it cut and stung our faces like a whiplash, and I, for one, was not sorry when a friendly bank gave us the opportunity of landing. Once safely on shore, we pushed our way with bowed heads, to escape the blinding snow, for home, and a hot dinner, and a capital one we had—cod and shrimp sauce, a rare haunch of mutton and jelly, and a boiled fowl, washed down with a bottle of Moët, was in itself sufficient to awaken a keen appetite, even had it not been doubly sharpened by our trip in the cold wind. Little did we think, as we sat over that

enjoyable meal, and listened to the roar of the storm, that the same tornado—I can call it nothing else—that had spun our punt round had sent the unfortunate “Eurydice” and her brave crew to the bottom. One could hardly believe that a short three hours could have shown such a change, even in our own erratic climate. At lunch-time a smiling landscape, lit up by a warm and radiant sun, the river sparkling and glittering in the bright light; at dinner the same scene, wrapped in a white mantle of still falling flakes, with a leaden stream dividing the snow-covered meadows. Dinner over, we drew our chairs up to a welcome log fire, filled our pipes with the fragrant Virginian weed, and much fishy talk, and trout fishing in particular, ensued. “Pity it’s been so cold, gentlemen! I could have shown you some rare fish if it had been anything like a feeding day.” Thames trout are proverbially “queer cusses,” as Artemus Ward would say; and only show themselves under certain conditions; our late spring weather was dead against them, and I felt assured at the time when these pages were written that if there was no change the prospect of trout fishers on “the first” would be small indeed. The river was running fine, and as bright as crystal; the wind obstinately set in a cold, blighty quarter. What we wanted was a change of wind to the south, or south-west, with some heavy, warm showers to give colour to the water, and open sunny weather; then some of the spotted beauties would be both seen and felt. Thames never held more trout than it does this year is the accepted verdict of good

judges—another evidence of the good being worked by the preservation societies; and at the commencement of the trouting season I could venture to say that had we had some warm, genial weather, I could have pointed out twenty separate fish feeding between Windsor Bridge and Boveney Lock. At Monkey Island there was a good fish at the top end; he, however, has gone to the happy hunting-grounds; another was located at the hole just below, where the chalk ballast for strengthening the banks has been put in, and Plummer told me he had plenty more of them round his little kingdom. How the storm howled round our snug sanctum! but what cared we. There we were, three jolly fellows; the whisky was good, the tobacco ditto, and we had any amount of experiences to con over, and so the evening slipped too rapidly away. One word to brother bobs, and I have done. You may rest assured that landing at Monkey Island you will find the fishing there is good, the beds clean as a new pin, and the cookery excellent—three little adjuncts that, combined with a tap of rare malt and moderate charges, will complete an angler's happiness.

## THE THAMES AT CAVERSHAM AND MAPLE DURHAM.

How truthfully the old Scotch proverb of "the best laid schemes o' mice an' men gang aft a-gley" may be borne out, the following o'er true tale will exemplify. I should fancy there is no sport in the whole calendar, and the hopes and anticipations formed of it, that is so likely to be upset by a multifarious variety of uncalculated chances as angling. A downright inveterate grumbler might, mayhap, consider, and forcibly express his conviction, that we have had no real fishing weather since the opening of the season—beastly cold winds and bright sun, and so on. And there would, to some extent, be a reason in his complainings. Take it for all in all, however, many worse commencements have been made, and my early prognostications as to the likelihood of an excellent barbel season has borne due fruit, for I scarcely remember, in previous years, when we have had so favourable a start, for nearly all alike, as in the present, and the fish taken have, as a rule, been a capital sample. Opening on a thoroughly unfishy day, the Thames has still shown to the votaries of the gentle craft that full baskets may yet be made, both from bank and punt, and many

a fisher's back has ached—mine to wit—with a heavy load of spoil from the river. Somewhere about the usual time after angling abstinence—to wit, a week or so, the old leaven began to operate again, and, whether it were in my stuffy office, or amid the rattle and busy hum of the toiling multitude of Fleet Street, with a hot sun overhead, I kept thinking of the whispering, rustling water flags, the glorious umbrageous shelter of tall trees, clothed in their summer livery of green foliage, and towering up, as it were, to meet the scudding, fleecy clouds sailing overhead in a sea of blue, then of the “water gardens” by the river's brink, gay with the bright yellow bloom of the flowering rush, in striking contrast to the gorgeous clumps of purple loosestrife hard by, with its graceful nodding head, the widely spreading beds of pink persicaria, and, most charming of all, the queenly water lilies, floating like patches of summer snow on the bosom of their mother, the river, whilst great bunches of pale, shy forget-me-nots peep, with loveliest azure petals, from every spot where they could struggle out to kiss the sunshine, from amongst their bigger and stronger relatives. Of course, I must go. I could call to mind swims I wot of, where one could peer down from the head of the punt as it drops slowly down with the stream, where a cultivated eye could catch sight of some mighty chub, safe wagging a tale under a sheltering root; these, mind, to be seduced by an artfully thrown fly, a big red or black palmer, which, lighting in the drooping willow

leaves, is next instant flicked off by a master-hand, and, falling light as a mother's salute on her sleeping babe's pink cheek, attracts big chubby's attention even as it falls, and out he comes with a rattle like that of a bulldog from his kennel, and gobbles up the furry, feathery morsel without an instant's reflection ; and then, how grand that "little go" that ensues ; strength and frightened determination to regain his stronghold on the part of the fish, a frail hold, a supple wrist and thoughtful craft enlisted in the service of the man at the rod's butt, the latter usually the victor. And oh ! those deeps, where the great bronze barbel, the gamest of the game, run riot in shoals, rolling over and over as they root among the sand and pebbles, and requiring infinite skill, as a rule, finest tackle, worms scoured bright as well kept kitchen pans, and a midnight meeting to be held over their heads by an attentive and administering spirit, who rains down half a pailful of lobs, as a sample of what they may expect on the day of days before the well is filled. One day I met an old friend, one of the best anglers in England, who had just returned from an expedition into Wiltshire ; the result instantly was claret cup and chat—about fishing ? Certainly. What had he done ? Simply nothing. Trout came up and looked at the fly—some with a rush and a boil of the water, some quietly, and as though they meant it, but a look was all the beauties vouchsafed. That over, down they plunged again. Try as he would, flies big, flies little, it was no go. "Well, did you try the

minnow?" I queried. "Minnow, my dear fellow, they'd have sent me to Portland or New South Wales if I had even hinted it." "Worm?" said I. "Worse and worse," he replied, with a look of horror, and changed the subject. "Where are you off to this week—of course up the Thames?" was his query. "Yes, but I hardly know where." "Well, then, I'll tell you. You love scenery when good, I know; likewise you can dabble a bit at barbel. Well and good. Write to Mills at Caversham, you'll find him a jolly fellow. Stay, I'll write, as he doesn't know you, I'll warrant he has any quantity of lobs; and oh, the barbel there, my boy! such labbers! try it, and you won't regret it." Thus it became a settled thing; my friend wrote, securing beds, &c., for Uncle and I, and, thinking we were in for some real marmalade, we started with hearts as high as a balloon in the air. The line to Staines was tolerably well known to both of us, but, passing that point, fresh beauties were unfolded as we rattled merrily along. Catching a glimpse of a punt at a well-known swim just below host Law's jolly hostelry, the Pack Horse, the occupants busy barbellng, I wondered how many of the tough-nosed beggars they had in the well. Then through a grand stretch of wide undulating moorland, just getting tinged with pink heath blossoms, while the fresh green fronds of the young ferns glowed in the sun like emeralds from the brown setting. Past Ascot, with a roar and a rattle, Wokingham and Bracknell, and anon we get a peep at the

deep, slow Loddon, with a trim "pub" below the bridge, and half a dozen punts blistering in the hot sun, and at last steam slowly into Reading, with its tall factory chimneys belching out columns of black smoke, busy in the manufacture of Huntley and Palmer's biscuits and appetising sauce, and here, as soon as we set foot on the platform, a waterside man every inch comes up, and touching his hat, seeming to intuitively guess we were the right people, says he has come from Mr. Mills, and adds "we'll go fishing immediately." "Good," thought I, "this looks stilton of the first order," so say, "All right, where to?" "Up the Kennet, sir, to-day; to-morrow in the Thames, and then he mopped his perspiring forehead, shouldered the luggage, and off he went at score. This is Clarke, the under-bailiff of the Reading Association, a civil, quiet fellow, a hard worker, and one having the character of a first-class fisherman. "How far is the water?" says Uncle, beginning to puff at the end of a hundred yards under the scorching sun. "About two miles and a half, sir," sounds on ahead from our pioneer. "What!" half shouts my friend, whilst his face shows blank amazement, "two miles and a half! Cab," and he hailed a passing vehicle the next instant. Half an hour's ride up some beautifully cool lanes brought us to a little rustic bridge, under which a shallow swift stream, the very home of all others for trout, ran. Here our Jehu did not care to proceed farther, so that we alighted, and skirting a long



stretch of most charming water, swift and eddying, deep and slow, came at last to a miniature weir, with a rapid foam-capped stream through the centre of the pool, where our guide told us lay mighty barbel in galore, any amount of chub, and very heavy trout. At this juncture I got my first slap on the nose. Having rigged up my tackle, I asked Clarke for the lobworms, and suggested his chopping some up to bait the pool. "I'm sorry to say I ain't got any lobs, sir, and what's more, it's been so blessed hot I couldn't get none. I had the best part of last night at it, and didn't get a dozen." "Then there is no barbel swim in the Thames baited?" said I, despondingly. "Ne'er a swim," cheerfully cried friend Clarke. I said no more, but calmly put on a red worm, only thinking what I would have given for a couple of thousand from Nottingham just then. One hour passed without a touch, I then gathered up my traps, and went to rejoin Uncle, who was fishing lower down; found him with two or three decent chub on the grass, and in the seventh heaven of delight with the water. Shoals of heavy chub passed and repassed on the brilliant gravel shallows, under our very noses, whilst some distance lower down some big perch were at feed under the bank, making the minnows and small fry skip like acrobats. Here I bent my steps, and, taking off my ledger, fitted up one of Gregory's small "Oxford" baits, without the red tassel, quickly had a run and a handsome perch, and killed two or three before the deep shades of evening, with the

recollection of four miles' walk in perspective, warned us that it was time to shut up shop. Lower down Uncle's "eagle eye" lighted on a dead fish floating—of some size, seemingly—which Clarke declared was a trout, and away he went to intercept it at the bridge. When we got down we found that it was, indeed, the relics of a magnificent trout that, when in condition, and, indeed, even then he was in grand trim, would have gone fourteen pounds at least—with spots on him as big as a shilling—a grand small head, while in his mouth, with both jaws level as a die, we found, cruel fate, two monstrous triangles. He had evidently broken away from some one's coarse tackle, and fretted to death. Truly the biggest fools get the best luck. I know some men who would have given a "tenner" to have been at the butt with that fish on. I enjoyed my walk home along the river's brink thoroughly. Uncle didn't, and the way he flopped down upon host Mills' sofa, nearly melted, was highly suggestive of the presence of undue adipose tissue, and the advantageous use of Turkish baths. However, he recovered by supper-time, and smoked sundry pipes of peace and contentment, with his legs on a chair, so I presume he has escaped permanent injury. The Crown at Caversham, where we were staying, is a neat, unpretending little house at the foot of an ugly iron bridge that spans the Thames, and as clean as a new pin. To artist or angler, therefore, who reads these pages, I can really recommend it. Again, it has this advantage to brother rods: the host is

head bailiff of the district, a keen and practical fisherman, and hints to a stranger will be always, I am sure, courteously given. The next morning was a scorcher, with the sun glowing like a furnace in a cloudless sky, the river like a sheet of glass, with boats, the piles of the bridge, the quaint eel bucks, and the gloriously foliaged trees reflected in the still, quiet depths with marvellous effect. I have said it was an ugly bridge, nay, it was hideous, but I forgot its unloveliness in the beauty of the glorious panorama of Nature that unfolded itself as I stood there in the fresh morning. Line followed line of purple foliage from undulating ridges of hills, until lost in the misty distance. Nearer the bright green of the cornfields, with the scarlet poppies glowing, and pastures starred with countless multitudes of daisies, rivet attention for a fleeting moment, while the shining river flows like a silver snake, with quiet ripple, past islands smothered in tall rushes and willows, out from whose sheltered banks creep scores of idle moorhens, too tame and too lazy even to hunt for food. Just then Clarke wends his way to the punt—oh, those hot seats, enough to scorch one's trousers!—with a tremendous cargo of ginger beer and ale, from which Uncle is great at compounding a mysterious beverage known as “shandygaff,” and then we get traps aboard, bound for the shelter of Purley Woods and perch fishing, our puntsman making himself a beast of burden for the nonce, and harnessing himself to the tow rope, whilst Uncle, adventurous mortal, braves heat and consequent

mopping, and sits down to the sculls. Every turn of the river, every bend, gives to our delighted vision fresh beauties. Here, on the right, is Caversham Quarry, or The Warren, a high, steep chalk cliff, with waving woods creeping up to its very summit, while the white glistening roadway from Maple Durham winds through and up the ascent, hidden every now and then by the trees, anon peeping out again. Many a big jack and chub shoots out from the water lilies, as the punt forges its way ahead, the stream narrowing every yard we went, the current getting swifter and more difficult to stem, and presently the grand woods of Purley shut in the winding stream, the giant trees leaning over the water, affording a cool and welcome shade out from the hot sun. Before reaching Purley, however, one of the sweetest little nooks I ever saw presents itself, the "Roebuck Inn," a little white hostelry, nearly covered with greenest ivy, and perched up on a hill-side high above our heads. Of course we must see the Roebuck, and land and clamber up a steep path, cut in the railway embankment, cross the line of the Great Western, and up the hill-side, along the path, where ivy and periwinkles, blue as maidens' eyes, trail down in luxuriant splendour. Shandygaff again, and then, from the platform of the Roebuck's garden, such a scene presented itself as not even fairest Devon, or the lovely vale of Matlock, my own dear native valley, could beat. Far and near one sees the grandly wooded slopes of lofty hills melt and fade away into dim blue distance. Near

“sea of troubles” that one has to buffet against at one time or another, and wanting that sense of sweet solitude, the opportunity of spending a day “exempt from public haunt,” and finding “tongues in trees, books in the running brooks, sermons in stones, and good in everything”—then, I say, row up from Caversham to Maple Durham, and you’ll get it.

## IN A WEIR POOL ON THE KENNET.

IF a man has an enemy, and his enemy is an angler, and, so being, it is desired to condemn him to condign and heavy chastisement, put him, say I, into a punt in one of the Lower Thames reaches, and tell him to catch fish. If that is not enough to make him wish himself unborn in a couple of hours, he is possessed of such an amount of equanimity and sweetness of disposition that he doesn't deserve to be punished, and should be released for the rest of the day from his awful doom. First of all there are steam launches, this year I verily believe more numerous than ever, certainly with increased steam-whistle power, cool effrontery, and selfish, hateful indifference to the comfort of others, on the part of a large proportion of the crews on board. Then boating parties in all shapes and proportions, from the big roomy galleon, holding pater, with a face like the setting sun, but happy and comfortable withal ; ma' and "the girls" lolling back in the stern-sheets, muffled up to the eyes, as a matter of course, in some fleecy, gauzy material, although the atmosphere is like the interior of the Jermyn Street Hammam, and pulled by the lads, home from Harrow or Eton, bound picnicing, as one can see at a glance at the well-filled hampers and cooking apparatus,

and come blundering over the swim, just shaving your poles, yet in this case nearly always with a courteous apology for their carelessness, generally owing to Ada, who is steering, having both eyes bright as sapphires, and as blue, bless her! focussed full upon Harry Dashington, who, just clearing the unfortunate with the rod in his hand at the other end of the punt, is going at racing pace in an outrigger, and splashing no little because he's altered his usual rate of stroke. Then there are lawyers' clerks and wretched Government "tenpennies," next come awful shop-boys with glaring ties, and a stock of threehalf-penny Cubas among them, not to be distinguished, mind, at a respectable distance, from the choicest product of the fair Havanna, followed by the gentlemen who get up parties in "fours" and "eights," and who arranging themselves in garments of the wildest boating character, which one would have thought would have racked the inventor's brain to the verge of insanity to produce, go madly tearing along, utterly reckless and utterly careless of others, of course with bare legs, chest, and arms, as being more decent where there are plenty of women, and in better keeping with the costume, from one end of a straight reach to the other. These last are the worst of all—the family boats, with the pretty girl-faces peeping from sun-hats, really don't seem to have any other idea than that they are almost aiding the fisher in his occupation; and if spoken to there's a "very sorry" from one of the prettiest girls to make amends. The shop-boys and the "tenpennies" look so awfully jolly

over the matter that one feels compelled to grin and bear it ; but for the infernal "fours" and "eights," with an individual in the stern who keeps nodding all the way like a Chinese mandarin, shrieking "Pull bow !" and "Now, No. 4 !" who is put there for his supposed competency as steersman, and for being the nearest approach to a mannikin that can be had, I really think there is no excuse ; yet of all others these are the men who seem to take the greatest delight in causing any one fishing the largest amount of annoyance. Bearing all these charming facts in mind, it puzzled me no little to decide upon where to attempt to make my mark among the fish on a recent occasion. I thought at one time of Halliford, and the big bream there, but I had such a "doing" in that locality at the hands of the river athletes that I quashed the notion at once ; and made up my mind to try up Pangbourne or Goring way, where I might, perhaps, be out of the beaten path, when in the very nick of time the postman brought me a letter from friend Mills at Caversham Bridge, the substance of it being that "Clarke had got a lot of lobworms, and thought the weir pool in the Kennet would pay for fishing." It only needed a moment's reflection to convince me that there, at any rate, I should find it free from the curse of launches and "eights," with crews gone rowing mad, to decide me ; so I jotted a line or two to Uncle to tell him of my anticipated trip, and ask him to meet me at Paddington for the 2.45. When I got there he was awaiting me, and the 2.45 being one of the Great



Western Company's excellent fast trains, something under the hour we found ourselves at Reading. Clarke, the under-bailiff, was soon descried among the little multitude on the platform, and being ready and willing to carry any amount of traps, shouldered the *impedimenta* of rods and luggage, and we in due course found ourselves at the pool's side. Thank goodness! there was no dearth of worms this time, and as I stood and surveyed the glorious swirl of water running in moderate flood from the weir head, circling and eddying round the camp sheathing, and the trunks of the partially submerged willows to the left of the pool, the element itself a splendid colour, I made up my mind that we were in for a big thing. My friend, as usual, was determined to be "among 'em" as soon as possible, and was rigged up and baited long before my gut had been soaked enough to please me. My readers will readily enough imagine that my anticipations of good sport were heightened when I saw, at the very first cast of his leger, a deuce of a pull at the top joint, almost before I thought the bullet could have settled down; an upward stroke of his arm, and then, the bent rod springing and bending like a bow of thin steel, telling of a big one, well-hooked, and boring away on the bottom. A gamer fish never felt a hook's point, and I watched the little fight going on with keen interest, quite prepared to find Uncle credited with a real good one. Spite, however, of his pulling like one twice his size, he weighed but four pounds when Clarke netted him, the greatest treat then being a study of my friend's good-

humoured phiz as he stood watching the bronze-gold fish among the fresh green grass while Clarke extracted the hook—there beamed content and complete happiness, and not until the game was bagged did a word escape his lips. It was only one when it did come, "Beer?" with a look of inquiry, and a glance at the big stone bottle cooling in the shallow water. Acquiescing, we all beered, and drank success to fish and fishing. Finishing his stoup of ale, our attendant seized the bag of worms and cast in handfuls at the head of the run, as a libation to the fish, and, returning from the weir fall, tells me, in a raised voice, so as to be heard above the din and roar of the falling water, to cast right down to the tail of the stream, and, having my hook baited now with a splendid lob, I wound up the bullet to within a couple of feet of the top ring, sent it whizzing thirty yards from my Nottingham reel, down to where the water shallowed, and put my rod down on the timbers to light my pipe. In an instant bang! bang! goes my top joint. I make a dash at the rod, striking villanously hard, of course, and away goes my leger bottom and bullet fast in the snout of a good fish. *Mea culpa! mea culpa!* I groaned to myself. Clarke looks on with reproachful yet compassionate eye, and holds up his hands in silent horror, while Uncle grins sardonically. It is an immense relief to a man's feelings to "cuss" a little sometimes, therefore, like the immortal Leatherstocking, who was wont to laugh uproariously, yet with no sound, I did a good solid cussing upon myself and my pipe generally, yet without disturbing the harmony

of Nature and the glorious sights and sounds around us, and it did me a world of good. All this time Uncle is driving the steel home every now and then, the bent rod and the scream of the wheel telling its own tale, and, while my fresh bottom is soaking, I watch my friend, and alternately the gambols of a grand trout, with great broad back, and a tinge of orange on his deep sides, that is feeding with a will here, there, and everywhere over the pool. "Now then," thought I, as I threw to the same place, "what's the betting about smashing up again?" Tug, says something in response to the silent question. Tug, niggle, niggle; tug! and at a long pull, up flies my stroke arm, not too hard this time, and away bowls a good fish, awakening the echoes of the evening with the joyful rattle of the whizzing reel. Clarke was in ecstasies, and proclaimed aloud that "he was certain sure we should kill a ton on 'em in the morning," utterly ignoring a heavier fall of water over the weir, that was slowly, but surely, altering the look and character of the pool, caused by the shutting in of some of the mill sluices lower down, and, to do our good attendant justice, surely never man was more anxious to show sport than he. The big basket was getting fuller of fish every moment, the joint production of my own rod and my friend's, so at last we made up our minds to leave off, warned by the deepening gloom, and packed up our rods, wending our way to the little bridge at the end of the lane, to which point my thoughtful friend—who is abominably lazy, though—had ordered a cab to keep tryst to

take us to Caversham. At break of day next morning I was up, making careful inspection of the sky, satisfied, went for another hour's snooze, delighted to find every early promise of a lovely day, and dropped off to sleep again, to be rudely awakened presently from a dream, wherein I thought I was in the middle of a pelting shower, to find Uncle dropping water on my up-turned visage. Out I bundled, and was soon down to a fisherman's breakfast. Then away we went, bound again for the lovely Kennet pool and barbel. Once clear of the town, we sauntered through a grand avenue of elms, leading up to the gates of Coley Park, from which point of vantage one gets a splendid panorama of the surrounding country—undulating ridges of hill and dale, topped by the distant spire of Christ Church to the right hand, and Colonel Ironmonger's ivy-covered residence, seen at the end of an immense stretch of cornfield, over which "waves of shadow" are thus early floating, lying to the left of the charming picture. Poor Uncle! if ever man was in melting mood he was when we got to the pool, and there we found, to our regret, that a very heavy flood was rolling down in boisterous waves, completely destroying the great chance we should have had, had the water kept in its normal condition. Well, there's always something; it is either too hot or too cold, too windy, or not enough breeze, too little water, or, as in this case, too much. So we took it as a matter of course, and fished the quiet eddies, killing a good creel of chub, and a few barbel before evening. It was

ordained, however, that the *bonne bouche* should come on the following day, our good host himself volunteered to go with us up the Thames, to a place that had been baited, where his punt already lay, and a little after 4 A.M. we made a start. To a lover of the beautiful in Nature no greater treat could be afforded than in a walk along the high road leading direct from Caversham to Maple Durham. One ascends a somewhat steep hill, and turning to the left hand it leads directly through the churchyard, a simple stone column marking the spot where sleeps the great iron-master, William Crawshay, into a road shaded by a profusion of grand old trees, round which ivy twines in twisted and confused growth, and where, from the dense shade, it is cool even on the hottest day. Fine slopes of chalky hills lie to the right, the road winding along at their feet, the undergrowth a thick cover of the most varied kind. Larch, birch, firs, and mountain ash here at one hand; oaks and giant hoary beeches on the other, their trunks white with age. Then comes a clump of the delicate green foliage of the juniper, half-smothered in clematis in full bloom, anon the shining leaves of holly and laurel peep out, while ferns, breast high, crop up among the sheltering roots of the shrubs; the whole place scented with the delicate perfume emanating from the firs. A lovely glade, indeed; the daylight softened and toned down, no sound to be heard save the whispering of the foliage and the wild pigeons' amorous coo coo, with the shining face of the river peeping out here and

there, through openings between the ivy-covered trunks of the stately monarchs of the wood, as it flows on peacefully in the valley at our feet. Fishing there was none. Uncle caught a chub of about a couple of pounds, and our host a fine eel. As for me, I did nothing, contented enough, so chaste was all around, to sit and look on at the lovely view seen in its fairest beauty by the light of early morn, and I cared little more than one of the swarm of moorhens clucking and cackling in the reeds, whether the fish bit or not. After breakfast we determined upon going up to the tail of the pool at Maple Durham, and fishing the sharps there, so harnessed the unhappy Clarke to the tow-rope once again, and the punt slowly forged its way among the weeds and beds of water lilies, white and yellow, past great clumps of water docks, and the arrowhead, with its pale white flower—past the quaint little Roebuck Inn, perched high up on the wooded hill-side, the Ferry House, and under the magnificent arch of Purley Wood, until the lock is reached, and there we find Sheppard, the fisherman, waiting for a gentleman, the owner of the fishery at the pool, and who was intending to try for a trout there. Uncle has a brilliant idea, and suggests that I should see him, and gain permission to fish in the coveted spot, shortly afterwards he came up, and, upon my preferring my request, at once courteously gave us permission. We selected a quiet corner under the shade of the trees, close to the weir fall, and first tried with lobbs, friend Mills going in with a lip-hooked gudgeon

on the off-chance of a jack, presently he gets a run, and then another, and yet another, at last hooking a pretty little three or four pounder, and, as I got never a touch at the lobs, I changed my leger bottom for a paternoster, whipped on a lively little dace, and in ten minutes had a run, and was fast in a five-pounder. Landing him, I threw out again, and got another almost directly, wonderfully well-fed fish, and this was altogether too much for Uncle. He could not put up with the leger after that, but fitted up a paternoster, and at the first throw hooked and broke away with a heavy fish, a piece of great misfortune. Altogether we had eleven fish in something like a couple of hours, but put two in again as being too small to retain, then, as we desired to catch an early train, and had some distance to go before Caversham was reached again, we made a start for home, spinning the water down, and, with nine decent jack in the well, felt very well satisfied with the issue of an unpromising day. I may add that the Kennet fishing is open to fair anglers, and would, I am sure, repay a workman ; it is, however, difficult to get at, being some distance from the station.

THE END.

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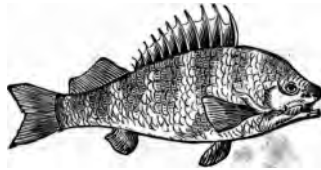
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